

INDIGENOUS SOCIAL WORK JOURNAL

Issues That Relate to Indigenous Relations

Volume 10, September 2016



CIRCLE represents the moon, the grandmother, the extended family.

FIRE represents the sun, centre of a family, warmth of a family.

GRAPHICS represent light from the fire.

LINES from the mouth represent communication.

NISHNAABE KINOOMADWIN NAADMAADWIN

**INDIGENOUS
SOCIAL WORK
JOURNAL**

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NISHNAABE KINOOMADWIN NAADMAADWIN

PRAYER

Thankfulness

Mino gizhep G'Chi Manido da kid noongo – Greetings of the Morning Great Spirit
As I face the East / Waabanong with Grandfather Sun / Giizis shining on my face,

Miigwech, G'Chi Manido miinwaa Mishomisag miinwaa Nookmisag
As I turn to face the South / Zhaawanong with Grandfather Sun / Giizis shining at my side,

Miigwech, G'Chi Manido miinwaa Mishomisag miinwaa Nookmisag.
As I face the West / Epingishmook with Grandfather Sun / Giizis shining at my back,

Miigwech, G'Chi Manido miinwaa Mishomisag miinwaa Nookmisag.
As I face the North / Giuwedinong with Grandfather Sun / Giizis shining at my side,

Miigwech, G'Chi Manido miinwaa Mishomisag miinwaa Nookmisag.
As I turn towards Mother Earth / Shagamik-Kwe with Grandfather / Sun Giizis shining upon me,

Miigwech, G'Chi Manido, kina gegoo emiizhiyan!
As I turn towards the Sky World / Kiishigokaning with Grandfather Sun / Giizis shining upon
my face,

Miigwech, G'Chi Manido, kina gegoo emiizhiyan!
As I turn inwards to my Inner World / Kiingene eshiyaayin with Grandfather Sun / Giizis shining
upon my body,

Miigwech, G'Chi Manido, kina gegoo emiizhiyan!
Miigwech, Miigwech, Miigwech, Miigwech.

**Cheryle Partridge/Baybaamoosay-Kwe
June 2016**

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FOREWORD

The Medicine Wheel is described in the book “The Sacred Tree” (1988)¹ as an ancient symbol for understanding our way of being in the world. The Medicine Wheel teaches about connectedness of the four aspects of being, the four races of man, and the four stages of life, and so on. We also can use it to describe the growth and development of the School of Indigenous Relations at Laurentian University.

Using the symbol of the pine cone as an example, the development of the School of Indigenous Relations begins in the EAST and travels clockwise around the circle. In the East, there is the seed which needs to be nurtured and protected to grow and to develop. The School of Indigenous Relations began its journey 27 years ago as the Native Human Services program, one of three streams in the School of Social Work. The idea for the program started as a seed during consultations with 27 First Nation communities in the Robinson-Huron area. The consultations highlighted the need for training for Indigenous Social Workers who would be able to respond to the issues and concerns of Indigenous communities.

As we move around the circle toward the SOUTH, the seed undergoes rapid transformation into a seedling. This is a period of turmoil and change, of struggling to find an identity, of gaining independence and self-determination. At this stage, patience and understanding are needed to deal with the challenges related to growing independence and creating a sense of autonomy. For the program, there was a natural progression from its early dependence on the mainstream Social Work program to developing a vision of becoming an independent program with its own accreditation. This was not without its challenges as the School had to make difficult choices about the direction to take to maintain its autonomy. The School continued building its foundation during this period and came to realize that there was a lack of printed academic Indigenous Social Work knowledge that could be drawn upon. It thus launched the Native Social Work Journal to fill this gap and to create a repository of knowledge.

The WEST direction represents movement towards adulthood. The seedling grows into a tree that develops branches that offer shelter and shade. For the Native Human Services program, we saw the progression from being a stream alongside Anglophone and Francophone Social Work offerings, to a standalone School of Native Social Work in 2008 followed by its own accreditation. In addition to the on-campus and distance education offerings, the School developed external partnerships with educational institutes.

In keeping with the movement toward globalization, the school changed its name to the School of Indigenous Relations in 2013, and also changed the name of Native Social Work Journal to

¹ Bopp, J., Bopp, M., Brown, L., Peter, C. (1988). *The Sacred Tree*. Lethbridge: Four Worlds Development Project.

the Indigenous Social Work Journal. The Journal has gained an international presence with contributions from top scholars.

The School has recently branched out with the creation of a Master of Indigenous Relations (MIR) program intended to advance research and leadership from within the Indigenous context, worldviews, methodologies and knowledge. When the MIR program was launched, the School did not anticipate the phenomenal growth in the program, which now includes faculty from multiple disciplines, and students who have presented their research on a wide range of topics internationally.

The NORTH direction symbolises the mature tree, which develops its own pine cones containing the seeds of wisdom of life, thus continuing the cycle of life. In this direction, those who have accumulated knowledge have a responsibility to pass on their teachings to those following behind. Elders/faculty of the School share their wisdom about Indigenous based curriculum, teachings, research, cultures, as well as professional and ethical practice with students in a nurturing environment. These students, in turn, are encouraged to share their research and understanding of the world. Through this cycle, we acknowledge the students as the future leaders and change-makers.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015)² recommends that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians engage in an ongoing process of reconciliation. Indigenous peoples need to lead the way to establish meaningful and respectful relations at all levels of Canadian society. The School of Indigenous Relations is strategically positioned to educate students to pursue self-determination through reclaiming, reformulating and reconstituting Indigenous traditions, cultures and communities.

The theme of Volume 10 of the Indigenous Social Work Journal is “Issues that Relate to Indigenous Relations”. Reflecting on the metaphor of the pine cone’s growth into a tree, Volume 10 of the Journal shifts its focus toward a wider view of social issues impacting on helping relationships. The articles published here include a range of topics: the justice system; healing and wellness; incorporating Aboriginal world views; food security; taxation and status cards; and, ceremonial practices for healing. We are pleased to include two student submissions in this Volume to encourage young academic writers to showcase their burgeoning knowledge.

Daniel Côté and Susan Maniowabi

² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Volume One: Summary. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.

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Putting together a journal requires the support and effort of a number of people. As co-editors of the Indigenous Social Work Journal we would like to acknowledge the people who played an important role in the production of the 10th edition of the Indigenous Social Work Journal.

We extend our gratitude to the authors of each of the articles in this edition of the journal. Your patience and understanding is greatly appreciated as are the time and effort that you devoted to producing your manuscripts. Your knowledge with respect to issues that relate to Indigenous Relations is greatly valued and we are proud to include your works in this edition of the journal.

A Chi-miigwech (big thanks) goes out to the Associate Editors from the School of Indigenous and the Indigenous Social Work Journal Editorial Review Committee who took the time to review and edit the manuscripts and provide feedback to the authors. Their careful review and suggestions for changes/edits really assists in the creation of a top-notch product that contributes to the knowledge on Indigenous thought, research and perspectives about Indigenous relations/relationships.

We hope that the articles contained within this edition of the journal inspire you to open your minds and your hearts to the relational aspects of Indigeneity and to include a focus on the larger picture of the social, political, cultural and intellectual aspects of “Indigenous Relations”.

Susan Manitowabi and Daniel Côté

INTRODUCTION

We are very fortunate to have had a range of research articles submitted to this Volume of the Journal ...

Marcie Romenco's article on food security and food sovereignty is based on the lived experience of a Cree student who shares her insights about the importance of living healthy and sustainable wellbeing for families and communities. Food security is a serious health issue for Indigenous people worldwide. Food insecurity combined with other social determinants of health place Indigenous peoples at greater risk to their health and well-being. This article focuses on the food security and food sovereignty of Indigenous peoples in the James Bay area of Northern Ontario. Indigenous people in this area are challenged due to the remoteness and isolation of their communities. In addition, climate change is having a great impact on their ability to grow and harvest foods as well as to hunt for food. This article links food security and food sovereignty to the need for sustainable foods and safe, drinkable water both of which affect health and wellbeing. More attention needs to be paid to the issue of food sovereignty and food security if we are to enable wellness in our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual realms.

The paper by Taima Moeke-Pickering and Cheryle Partridge is presented in two parts: the establishment and positioning of the School of Indigenous Relations (formerly the School of Native Human Services) within a mainstream University institute and the positioning of Aboriginal worldviews in social work education. The second part of this paper discusses how students are able to integrate Aboriginal worldviews and Aboriginal teachings into theory and practice.

Natasha Brien's article deals with the issue of Indigenous criminality. The author points to legal sanctions as colonial tools of containment and displacement which need serious reconsideration by policy makers and social workers if we are to address the over-incarceration of Indigenous people in the prison systems. This is of critical importance now as the Canadian political climate has assumed a 'tough on crime' position which has led to the implementation of the Omnibus Crime Bill and prison expansion throughout the country. The author advocates for restorative justice approaches such as sentencing circles, and circles of support and accountability which complement and honour Indigenous principles of reciprocity, reconciliation, and self-determination, while working towards healing and the reduction of recidivism.

The article by Gus Hill discusses the growing need for traditional healing with Indigenous people. This paper begins with a description of the damaging effects of colonization that have resulted in historical trauma and deep soul wounding for Aboriginal peoples. One way that Aboriginal individuals and communities heal from these deep soul wounds is through cultural specific healing practices which includes providing opportunities for spiritual growth and

cultural awareness. Traditional healers and helpers from a variety of cultures share their understandings of health and healing, including use of ceremony and medicine, power or prayer and rites of passage. The paper identifies principles of traditional health and healing that can be used in the development and implementation of holistic healing programs.

Awhina Hollis- English's paper examines the challenges and contemporary issues experienced by indigenous Māori social workers in Aotearoa, New Zealand as they interact and relate with non- Māori social workers on a daily basis. Kaupapa Māori research techniques were utilized in qualitative interviews and hui (focus groups) with 30 Māori social workers. This article presents the challenges, tensions and workplace issues in the relationships between Māori and non- Māori social workers. Coping mechanisms for dealing with miscommunication and cultural misunderstandings within these relationships are identified.

Colonization and cognitive imperialism has effectively silence Indigenous peoples' voices. Celeste Pedri-Spade utilizes an autoethnographic narrative approach to share her lived experience as a Status First Nation Indian shopper choosing to exercise her tax exemptions rights on purchased goods. Through her narrative she describes her inner and outer conflicts as she engages in critical self-reflection of her 'Indianness'. The author hopes to foster critical thought and dialogue around issues stemming from Canada's Indian Act such as the inventorying of Status First Nation individuals, public misconceptions and reactions to tax exemption provisions and the treatment of Status Indian shoppers. Sharing of personal stories, suspending preconceived judgements and respectful listening are ways in which we are able to enter into another's experience of the world.

Clarissa Kennedy's article reports on a 'Sisters in Spirit' event that occurred on Oct 4, 2014. The Sisters in Spirit vigil was dedicated to honouring the lives of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and supporting the families who have been tragically touched by the loss of a loved one to violence. Violence against Indigenous peoples, specifically women and girls, continue to be a long-standing issue in Canada. This event helped this student to realize how cultural ceremonies positively impact community members. The author identifies four basic principles that underlying an Indigenous helping approach. These four basic principles can be used to determine relevant, culturally appropriate responses designed to meet the needs of the Indigenous community that you are working with.

The Over-Incarceration of Canadian Indigenous People: Moving from Punitive Practices Towards Healing Spirit Injuries

Natasha Brien

Abstract:

Legal sanctions against Indigenous people have, and continue to be, used as a colonial tool of containment and displacement. The issue of Indigenous criminality is particularly pertinent now, as Canada is immersed in a political climate in which a 'tough on crime' position has led to the implementation of the Omnibus Crime Bill and prison expansion throughout the country. While disproportionate numbers of First Peoples are incarcerated, the carceral experience only exasperates any existing spirit injuries, through the perpetuation of violence and separation from families, communities and culture. A punitive hegemony needs to be reconsidered by policy makers and social workers, in lieu of moving towards the implementation of restorative justice approaches whenever possible; approaches such as sentencing circles, and circles of support and accountability. The latter is complementary to, and honours Indigenous principles of reciprocity, reconciliation, and self-determination, while working towards healing and the reduction of recidivism.

Introduction

Indigenous people have an extensive history of being criminalized within a Canadian context - from having ceremonial practices outlawed, to enduring police aggressions for protesting grave socio-political injustices committed against individuals, communities, and the environment. Canadian political and legislative measures are deeply implicated in the enactment of genocidal attempts to eradicate Indigenous culture, such as residential schooling and the 60's scoop. While dominant patriarchal, Eurocentric discourse often attempts to instruct Indigenous people to 'move on' or 'just get over it (colonialism)', this is an impossibility considering we are living in a neocolonial area, in which systemic racism continues to be enacted in a multiplicity of ways.

One such example that will be discussed throughout this paper, is the over-incarceration of First Peoples within jails and prisons throughout this country. As such, I argue that the prison industrial complex is a neocolonial practice that perpetuates spirit injuries incurred by Indigenous people in Canada, through the abuse of power, systemic exclusion, and violence. The use of carceral containment is rarely ever an environment conducive to healing because it is maintained in a way that focuses on principles of punishment, which do not address social inequities often leading to crime, nor critical reflexivity about the impacts of offences committed. In lieu of this model, I propose a paradigm shift that moves away from punitive

hegemony, towards healing through restorative justice approaches whenever possible, which are closely aligned with First Peoples values of reciprocity, reconciliation, and self-determination.

Two Historical Narratives

There is a lot of evidence supporting the position that Canadian legal and social work discourses have been misused as tools of oppression by the dominant, White, settler-society to oppress Indigenous people (Backhouse, 1999; Sinclair, 2009). Shamefully, I note there has been no shortage of government-based policies and/or actions taken with the (sub) conscious purpose of eradicating First Peoples culture, identity, land, and human rights.

While there are exhaustive examples prior to, in between, and hereafter the events I will describe, this section focuses on two cases of the historical criminalization of Indigenous people, one that occurred nearly a century ago - the potlatch ceremony, and the other being a more recent historical event - the Oka Crisis (Fournier & Cray, 1997). These two circumstances will demonstrate that the forward moving clock does not always signify progress in the relationships between settlers and Indigenous people within Canada.

The potlatch is a traditional Indigenous ceremony in which people converge for various occasions, such as births, deaths, weddings, and as well, for the distribution of wealth (Newhouse, 2000). From 1884 until 1951 – a span of sixty-seven years, this ceremony was made illegal, with the goals of preventing the transmission of cultural knowledge and traditions, while enforcing a turn from collective distribution of wealth, towards capitalistic ideals of individual wealth (Yang, 2000). This was not idle legislature; rather, people were heavily policed, arrested and jailed as a result of continuing to partake in this ceremony. This was evident in 1922 at Namgis Chief Dan Cranmer's underground potlatch for a wedding in Alert Bay, where Indian agents arrested approximately fifty people (Loo, 1992).

Another example of a contemporary historical conflict occurred in 1990 with the Oka Crisis. The Oka Crisis took place in Quebec when the Mohawk people of Kanehsatake protested the development of a golf course and condominiums that were to be constructed on Mohawk land, which was also a burial site (Koenig & Neale, 1993). Although images of the physical seventy-eight day standoff between Mohawk people, allies, and actors of the state – politicians, Quebec provincial police, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the army, were highlighted within media representations internationally, this confrontation was about much more than a golf course; essentially it was an ideological war.

The proposed golf course and condominiums demonstrated reckless disregard for the cultural, ancestral, and spiritual value of that land; aspects of life that surpass fiscal figures. Rather, the message transmitted on behalf of the state was of a neocolonial discourse, relaying that genocidal attempts to eliminate Indigenous people are not 'a thing of the past'. Standing up

against racist, colonial politics is rarely ever met with compassion or understanding amongst settlers who perpetuate a conquering disposition. As such, the Quebec provincial police, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, as well as the army, became involved in the deployment of tear gas, acts of physical violence, making arrests and remand placements as tools of containment against the challenge being posed to the state's misuse of power (Hedican, 2012).

A Contemporary Context

While legal discourse was used within historical narratives as a state mechanism of power and control, Canadian's are currently living within a political climate in which the Conservative government maintains a 'tough-on-crime' position (Cook & Roesch, 2012). What this means, is that since the passing of the Omnibus Crime Bill in 2012, the federal government announced that millions of dollars were to be allocated towards prison expansion (DeKeseredy, 2013). This is relevant for First Peoples, considering in 2011/12, the Office of the Correctional Investigator noted that within the past five years of the report, there had been 1,827 new federal offenders, 722 of whom self-identified as Aboriginal (Aboriginal being a state term used in the statistical reports), while the White prison population remained stable (Sapers, 2012).

The Office of the Correctional Investigator additionally pointed out, "Over the last 10 years, while the overall non-Aboriginal inmate population has modestly increased by 2.4%, the Aboriginal inmate population has increased significantly by 37.3%", and that Aboriginal offenders are "...more likely to have their parole revoked, less likely to be granted parole...return to custody at a higher rate..." (Sapers, 2012, p. 4). Thus, the settler imposed sanctioning of Indigenous criminality is a common thread throughout countless generations.

This evidence supports the point that the Indigenous population is disproportionately represented in a state of over-incarceration within the Canadian carceral system, which raises important questions about the nature of the crimes for which First Peoples are being incarcerated. Such questions cannot be easily summed up with a generalized response, because there are often distinctions between the nature of on and off-reserve offences. In 2004, "On reserve crime rates...were three times higher than rates in the rest of Canada..." often as a result of divergent economic, health, and poor living conditions (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, & Johnson). Along with on and off-reserve differences in crime, "Aboriginal people were 10 times more likely to be accused of homicide than were non-Aboriginal people", however, murders committed by Indigenous people were less likely to be premeditated, as they often occur as emotional responses to various circumstances (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, & Johnson, pp. 8,9). Additional points to consider are that Indigenous people who are incarcerated are often younger than non-indigenous people, with lower levels of education and work history, and higher levels of substance use and mental health issues (Adelson, 2005; Cunneen, 2005-2006).

With these alarming statistics, one must wonder why Canada's current state of affairs in relation to the Indigenous population being held within jails and prisons continues to exist. Additionally, what effects this must have on the individuals serving time, their immediate and extended family members, as well as their communities? To avoid further perpetuation of colonial discourse, such complex, multi-layered issues, need to be contextualized through the use of an anti-oppressive, decolonizing lens.

An Anti-Oppressive, Decolonizing Analysis

I support the standpoint that countless years of systemic violence, intergenerational trauma, loss of identity, displacement, and forced poverty, comprise at minimum one half of the dominant factors intimately implicated in this social crisis (Dickson-Gilmore & LaPrairie, 2005). While the original interactions amongst European settlers and Canada's First Peoples appeared to be based on sharing resources and information through consensual agreements, it was only a matter of time until settlers changed their dispositions toward exploitation and violence (Morin, 2007).

When systems of interaction moved from egalitarian agreements to a power-over dichotomy, whereby settlers began engaging in acts of non-reciprocity that involved taking without adequately giving in return, any balance within daily life that was previously experienced amongst both groups of people was significantly transformed. From the overuse of Canada's natural resources, to the implementation of unjust laws made without Indigenous consultation or consent, colonial practices boldly demonstrate a type of hierarchical hegemony that privileges Eurocentric values of ownership, capitalism, and individualism (Shewell, 2004). Even within earlier treaties, it appears as though the language used in the written word by the settlers, may have been intentionally ambiguous so as to leave open multiple possibilities in the ways these agreements can be interpreted (Morin, 2007). Hence, many disputes continue over treaty rights via land claims for example, while additional layers of oppression have been added through the implementation of the Indian Act of 1876 (Cardinal, 1999).

This Act and similar bodies of assimilative-based governance have resulted in residential schooling, in which children were forced from their homes to live in Christian-run 'educational facilities', often involving severe physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual abuses (Menziez, 2010). As well, there was the sixties scoop that witnessed the abduction of Indigenous children from their families by the masses, frequently placing them into abusive foster care situations, as well as intercultural adoptions by White families throughout Canada and abroad (Fournier & Cray, 1997).

The resulting intergenerational trauma is not only psychological in its manifestation, rather, it is deeply embodied within core beings on all levels – physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally (Menziez, 2010). When one experiences a violent act, such as a home invasion for example, it can take many years of healing to begin to function in a capacity previously

experienced, if this is even possible at all. Hence, one must ask, what are the impacts when great, great grandparents all the way through to our current generation, continue to be in a perpetual state of trauma because of colonial-based human rights violations, rooted in systemic violence and racism?

Cultural dislocation, internalized self-hatred, as well as an array of intense emotions ranging on a spectrum from outright anger, to pride in the resilience required to survive and thrive despite such atrocities, are some outcomes of colonization. Taking the historical and modern-day context of injustices into account, I assert that becoming in conflict with the law, albeit through assault, substance use, property crimes, etcetera, are symptoms of much deeper socio-political-emotional-physical-environmental-spiritual issues, often stemming from the embodiment of colonial practices, both past and present.

While the saying ‘you do the crime, you pay the time’ is a sentiment commonly expressed in passing conversation, it implies a blind form of justice consisting of fair applications of the law. It is my position, however, that the nature and administration of a criminal sentence, particularly amongst Indigenous people, is not an unbiased act despite such claims often emanating from both legislative and judicial systems/actors.

Conversely, I argue that systemic, discriminatory, judicial-related practices play significant roles in the carceral journey, which includes high statistics of imprisonment rates amongst First Peoples of Canada – the additional half of the over-incarceration puzzle. This point is supported throughout the literature, which clearly outlines an existing disparity amongst increased denial of bail, harsher sentencing outcomes, longer time served in segregation, and lower rates of parole opportunities between Indigenous people who are in conflict with the law and their non-Indigenous counterparts (Green, 1997; LaPrairie, 1990).

While I am not in any way denying that Indigenous people commit crimes, what I am stating, is that society must view these crimes within a colonial framework - an approach taken within the philosophical underpinnings of the Gladue Principle (Williams, 2009). The Gladue Principle requires that all self-identified Indigenous people have the opportunity to undergo an assessment that considers experiences with residential schooling, and other forms of colonial-based traumas, as well as health and substance use issues, which are then incorporated into the judicial sentencing process (Native Women’s Association of Canada 2013).

A critique of the Gladue Principle made by the Native Women’s Association of Canada, however, is that courts have been seen to “...ignore Gladue...” and that there aren’t enough “Gladue writers” (meaning people who generate the Gladue reports about systemic factors that play a role in the accused person’s implications with the legal system), as well as the fact that “Judges, parole officers, and others within the criminal law system poorly understand what systemic discrimination is...” (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2013). Hence, good

intentions that may inform the creation of legal policies are not enough to guarantee social and systemic change, for the people who interpret text into action must also be educated, and onboard with the intended purpose(s) of the ideologies driving the written word.

Critical Reflections

While I have been interweaving critical reflections throughout this paper, I will utilize this section to discuss some ideas moving forward, in regards to dealing with matters of Indigenous criminality. First and foremost on a macro level, the Canadian government must become accountable for past and present implications of colonial practice, which goes beyond the 2008 quasi-apology in for residential schooling issued by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in the house of parliament (James, 2008). There exists a disjuncture between this type of federal 'recognition' and current tough-on-crime legislation that doesn't take historical and contemporary acts of violence against Indigenous communities into account. Hence, it is hypocritical to institute legislative policies that differentiate 'the good citizen' from 'the deviant citizen' as measured by one's obedience to Canadian criminal laws.

Why I say this, is because the creation and implementation of various criminal laws are often guided by underlying values of property protection and the promotion of societal safety. Yet, many legislative decision-makers simultaneously disregard these principles when dealing with Indigenous issues. Examples of which include, the existence of unresolved land claims, the ongoing state of poverty on and off-reserve for many First Peoples/communities, and reckless disregard for the countless missing and murdered Indigenous women throughout Canada (Culhane, 2003). Thus, how can Indigenous people be asked to abide by political and legal systems entrenched in 'do what I say, not what I do' rhetoric?

People implicated in maintaining a capitalistic, patriarchal, colonial system sustained by the existence of poverty, lack of access to education, health care, healthy food and clean water through massive economic gaps, are in no position to say who is guilty of committing what crime. In fact, I question whether the current expansion of Canada's prison industrial complex is indeed a response to crime embedded within pro-victim values at all, particularly considering crime rates were not rising when the Omnibus Crime Bill passed into law (Cook & Roesch, 2012).

Rather, prison expansion and the continued over-incarceration of Indigenous people can be viewed as another lucrative opportunity for capital gain at the expense of human lives. The Canadian economy, massive corporations, and some politicians are financially benefiting from a type of 'slave labour' performed by people who are imprisoned. For example, federal inmates often hold jobs, such as working in the kitchen, orchard apple picking, making clothing and textiles for the CORCAN program, and so forth, earning from \$1.50 to \$6.90 per day, with CORCAN workers potentially making an additional maximum of \$2.50 per hour as 'incentive

pay' (Bonnycastle, 2011). Furthermore, the warehousing of Indigenous people into correctional facilities is colonial in nature because it immortalizes the historical practices of displacement between Indigenous families, nations, and the land (Ericson, McMahon, & Evans, 1987).

Another pertinent issue is when people who served carceral sentences are released back into the community chances of gainful employment can become exponentially strained due to their criminal records (Pager, 2003). This demographic must also continue on life's journey with additional spirit injuries, often acquired by witnessing and/or partaking in extreme forms of violence and coercion within correctional facilities (Rhodes, 2001). While I do believe a person should be held accountable for his/her wrongdoings, I sincerely advocate for the implementation of restorative justice philosophies whenever possible, in lieu of incarceration.

Healing Spirit Injuries by Embracing Restorative Justice Approaches

Restorative justice within the context of this discussion entails having all actors associated with the crime who consent to the process, come together to discuss various elements related to the offence. One such example is an elder-facilitated community sentencing circle, in which the details of the crime are discussed, as well as the perpetrator and victim's life narratives, the ways in which the crime has changed both lives, and what the victim, as well as the offender requires to heal on a go-forward basis (which may/may not involve serving a custodial sentence) (Sullivan & Tift, 2001).

A second application of restorative justice exists within circles of support - a transferable concept commonly used for high-risk sex offenders, in which people serving sentences within the community and/or who are released from prison are held accountable and encouraged by a select group of community members (Wilson & Prinzo, Circles of Support: A Restorative Justice Initiative, 2002). The role of community members is not one of policing the individual per se, but rather supporting him/her through the practice of exercising non-judgment. This is accomplished in a way that the person who committed the crime has people whom s/he can call upon when feeling an inclination to revert to unhealthy lifestyle choices (Cesaroni, 2001). The circle of support is also there to serve as a reminder of the individual's strengths, and to celebrate all of the positive attributes s/he possesses. Realistically, it is highly unlikely restoration will be complete within one sitting, however, through the continued use of programs such as the two discussed above, reconciliation on various levels is indeed a realistic goal, which can double by assisting with reducing recidivism rates (Wilson, Cortoni, & McWhinnie, 2009). These approaches work to bring to the foreground Indigenous values of reciprocity, reconciliation, and self-determination, by ensuring there is no crosstalk within the circles, emphasizing opportunities for all parties to listen and to be heard in a respectful way, while being able to collectively determine the outcome of a crime committed (Lyons, 1984). As such, a true sense of communal accountability is emphasized, with the potential for some closure amongst both sides, concepts that are often imperative in order to continue living in a healthy way.

A Case Example of Restorative Justice

One successful, although non-indigenous application of these principles is evident in the case example of Ms. Mary Johnson from Minnesota, United States of America, whose twenty year old son was killed in 1993, by sixteen year old Mr. Marlon Green, who later changed his name to Mr. Oshea Israel (Syrett, 2012). Upon discovering her son had been murdered, Ms. Johnson was devastated, especially considering the crime consisted of a violent shooting. Ms. Johnson explained that she had endured multiple emotions following the revelation of the murder, two of which were initially retribution and hate. Ms. Johnson would not rest until Mr. Israel was given the maximum prison sentence possible to 'pay for what he had done' (Johnson, A "Hero Among Us" - From Death to Life , 2011).

While at the sentencing hearing of Mr. Israel, Ms. Johnson said that she forgave him, only to recount years later that those were empty words. In the time subsequent to the sentencing hearing, Ms. Johnson realized the twenty-five and a half year incarceration term of the man who killed her son, did not help to heal her pain. Eventually, after a more than a decade had passed, she requested an in-person visit with Mr. Israel at Minnesota Stillwater State Prison, where he was serving his sentence. Mr. Israel did not know what to expect of this request, however, after the two met with restorative justice workers, he consented while noting that he too had deep-rooted feelings about the incident. At the visit, the mother of the victim said she realized that her son's murderer could have easily been her son and vice versa, as they were both troubled youths at a party when the incident transpired (Johnson, 2014).

At the end of the visit, Ms. Johnson requested to hug Mr. Israel. When they embraced, Ms. Johnson experienced a flood of emotions release from her body as she began sobbing and trembling, while Mr. Israel literally held her body up as she momentarily lost the ability to remain standing upright (Tevlin, 2009). At this point, Ms. Johnson realized what forgiveness and reconciliation truly felt like. Following this visit the two remained in contact as Ms. Johnson would visit Mr. Israel, while corresponding through letters and telephone calls. When Mr. Israel was ready to be released, Ms. Johnson found him an apartment next door to her place of residence. Since his release, the pair publically speaks together about their experiences in hopes of being living examples of how reconciliation can incite a type of mental, spiritual and overall embodied healing. Ms. Johnson now frames her experience as having lost one son, while adopting a 'spiritual son' (Johnson, 2014).

Hence, Ms. Johnson and Mr. Israel's intercepting paths, although enmeshed with pain and sorrow, were not in vain. Through this brave restorative justice process, they were not only able to heal their spirit injuries and traumas, but also those of others through openly sharing their narratives. While Ms. Johnson and Mr. Israel's story entailed a positive aftermath for both parties, this approach to healing may not be a chosen path for everyone. The perpetrator must be ready to openly listen to the impacts of his/her actions, while some victims of crime may not

believe offenders are ‘deserving’ of forgiveness (Herman, 2005). It is possible restorative justice may be easier to implement for some crimes as opposed to others. For example, someone who had his/her car vandalized may be more apt to sit across from the perpetrator to engage in dialogue, as opposed to a woman who was brutally raped. However, one cannot assume suitability in the application of restorative justice processes, since this is for the parties involved to decide.

Reconciliation is also a reciprocal process that can be lengthy, often necessitating serious commitment, and a plethora of emotions that need to be continuously attended to. The purpose of providing this case example, however, is to bring theory into practice by demonstrating that restorative justice is not an elusive concept. It is a perspective that invites a paradigm shift from punitive policies that solely punish individuals for wrongs committed, towards embracing responsibility and focusing on efforts required to facilitate healing and a sense of wellbeing for all parties involved (Hudson, 2006).

A Call to the Profession of Social Work

To bring this conversation back to the profession of social work, a solid starting point for working with Indigenous people in conflict with the law, is attaining holistic, Indigenous historical perspectives that focus on past and current colonial practices, as well as strengths and resiliencies of Canada’s First Peoples. Doing so, honours the notion of working towards the elimination of further spirit injuries, essentializing ideologies, and/or pathologization of this demographic, and/or their families.

Social workers can offer knowledge and support for Indigenous people who may be navigating legal systems, as well for their families, friends and communities. Those people who are working within court settings may be able to provide awareness and training on the Gladue Principle once educated on this topic, or serve as facilitators within a restorative justice process. Engaging with this type of work may assist with increasing diversion rates when appropriate, and the distribution of fair sentencing that works towards reducing Indigenous populations from unnecessarily ending up in the penal system.

Within the social work practice world, it is equally important to learn about, partake in, and/or make referrals to relevant Indigenous programs as per the client’s request, considering not all people with Indigenous heritage are connected to, and/or identify with traditional cultural practices. Having knowledge of Indigenous agencies and programs will help to ensure service users have increased opportunities to integrate traditional ceremonies within their healing journeys, such as the sweat lodge, or full moon ceremonies. It is also important to consider ways that ceremony can be expanded to include ideas such reintegration ceremonies for people leaving correctional facilities to rejoin their families and communities (Zellerer & Cunneen, 2001).

Embedded within the job description of ‘critical social-worker’, is the vital role of advocacy. Advocacy in relation to Indigenous issues should always be in consultation with Indigenous Peoples. With this said, social workers can tap into their ‘professional power’ to assist with igniting socio-political changes that work towards the eradication of unfair criminal outcomes, as well as racist, sexist, patriarchal, Eurocentric, colonial hegemonies instituted on micro, mezzo, and macro levels. In addition to advocating for changes within the criminal (in) justice system, it is paramount to address many of the root causes of crime, such as Indigenous poverty, displacement of families and communities, and gendered violence against mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, and so forth.

Lastly, social work professors within post-secondary institutions should consider the ways in which restorative justice philosophies and Canadian Indigenous histories, as disseminated from First Peoples perspectives, can be included within course syllabi. In addition, there needs to increasingly be more Indigenous social work scholars instructing courses, and Indigenous people with lived experience invited to be guest speakers within post-secondary spaces. Academics can also disseminate the above-discussed knowledge when writing in scholarly journals, as contributions to decolonizing theories and practices that contest the Eurocentric hierarchal hegemony that too often values empirical, scientific knowledge over traditional and oral knowledge bases.

Conclusion

The excessive use of criminal (in) justice tactics such as racially biased policies, abuses of institutional power, and the disproportionate number of Indigenous people continuously being incarcerated are not new phenomenon, rather, they have been in place for many generations. Warehousing Indigenous people within Canadian jails and prisons has done nothing to improve intergenerational trauma stemming from historical and contemporary acts of colonization.

In lieu of resorting to the overzealous use of correctional facilities, politicians, policy makers, judicial actors, and social workers, should be moving towards restorative justice practices that hold the perpetrator of crimes accountable through facilitated, honest, consensual dialogues amongst offender(s), victim(s) and communities, as well as through the creation of strong support networks for all people impacted by crime whenever possible. This, in combination with advocacy for the eradication of systemic racism within the criminal (in) justice system and society in general, are two very important pieces involved in working towards honouring Indigenous values of reciprocity, reconciliation and self-determination, while promoting holistic, collective approaches to healing and social change.

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In the Trenches: Traditional Healer's Understanding of Health and Healing

Gus Hill

Abstract

This study explored understandings of traditional healing from the perspectives of traditional healers and helpers. The sample of sixteen individuals was initially identified by key informants, and then the sample snowballed by word of mouth. Among the sample are healers from a variety of cultures, including Anishnaabe, Mohawk, Oneida, Seneca, Paiute, Inuit, Innu, Cree, Odawa, and Potawatomi. Traditional indigenous protocols were followed by the researcher during the course of the study. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with each participant. Interviews were audio-recorded and verbatim transcripts were analyzed qualitatively. These individuals shared their understanding of the work that they do, including ceremonies, use of medicine, power of prayer, and rites of passage, as well as the implications of traditional healing in this ever-changing society. The findings suggest there is a growing need for traditional healing with indigenous people.

Keywords: Aboriginal, Healing, Health, Holistic, Indigenous, Traditional Healers

Introduction

The process of European colonization created an inter-generational illness that continues to affect every Aboriginal person in Canada. The Aboriginal healing movement, which has developed out of the reclamation of traditional knowledge, has had positive effects in the healing of Aboriginal people (Absolon, 2010; Hill, 2014) and Aboriginal communities (Hill & Cooke, 2014). However, the current social climate of Aboriginal people continues to be fraught with worry and illness due to the ongoing and historical maltreatment of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people need healing now more than ever before.

Looking for the effects of illnesses on a reservation or in any tribal community is like 'shooting fish in a barrel.' Illness is widespread and touches everybody on a reservation. As Wilson and Wilson (1999) articulate:

The devastating effects of attempts at forced assimilation have left their mark on many First Nations communities. All too many are in a state of complete dependence with no belief or hope in their own collective will or ability to make substantial change. Other communities struggle on by depending on short-term funding for programs initiated outside their own environment. A deep-rooted psychology of poverty permeates and is evidenced in squalor, apathy, internal power struggling, poor social skills, and perpetual

grieving. In fact, the effects of colonization run so deep that they have in many cases produced complete communities of dysfunction (pp. 137-138).

Aboriginal people are facing the highest rates of unemployment, incarceration, infant mortality, suicide and substance dependency, as well as the lowest achievement levels in education in Canada (RCAP, 1996; Schouls, 2002). Such long standing social problems have resulted in a phenomenon of a people mourning the hardships and trauma of their ancestors that has been referred to as “unresolved historical grief” (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997), and has been labelled by indigenous scholars as “violence” that results from “colonial imposition” (Cote-Meek, 2014). This can also be called intergenerational trauma as it is somehow perpetuated through successive generations of people (Abadian, 1999; Battiste and Henderson, 1998; Graveline, 1998).

There is a sense of profound and continued suffering among Aboriginal people that is complex and interconnected with a loss of spirit. “Communities often turned inward and let their suffering give way to a desire to be dead. Violence and family abuse became entrenched in communities which had no hope . . . white society did not see and did not care” (Smith, 1999, p. 146).

The policies of forced assimilation have left a legacy of turmoil and illness within generations of Aboriginal people. Policies such as the Indian Act and the Gradual Civilization of Indian Children Act (Schouls, 2002) have stripped the Aboriginal cultures of Canada of their identity, language, traditional lifestyle, and knowledge systems. Aboriginal cultures have, in many ways, transcended the historical traumas perpetrated by the colonizing societies. Sadly though, in many more ways, Aboriginal cultures are still struggling to heal the damaging effects of colonization: residential schools, exploitation and commodification of traditional knowledge, and the exploitation of physical resources, to name but only a few (Cote-Meek, 2014). These issues continue to illustrate the context of social problems affecting Aboriginal people, and demonstrate the ever-increasing need for holistic healing (Absolon, 2010; Hill, 2014; Nabigon, 2006). The ripple effects of residential schools and the sixties child welfare scoop of Aboriginal children have left a legacy that includes alcohol and drug abuse, substance abuse, sexual abuse, violence, harsh and ineffectual parenting, chronic rage or depression, and grave mistrust, all with few mechanisms to address the underlying problems (Bopp & Lane Jr., 2000; Nabigon, 2006).

The need for traditional healing among Aboriginal people is described by Warry (1998): Culture, identity, tradition, values, spirituality, healing, transformation, revitalization, self-determination, self-government: A spiral of ideas and actions constitute community healing. At the most basic level, when Aboriginal people speak of community healing they suggest that there are many individuals within their communities who must heal themselves before they will be capable of contributing to the many tasks that lie ahead. They talk of finding ways to help support individuals who must heal deep wounds. This

can only be accomplished if people are provided with opportunities for spiritual growth and cultural awareness (p. 240).

Indigenous Canadian people have been using culture-specific traditional healing practices for thousands of years; however, these methods of healing have become less attractive to the very culture from which they come since colonization and the introduction of the scientific practice of medicine. While medicine has contributed to the physical (biological) health of the human species, it relates to solely biological (physical) illness, thereby excluding spiritual, mental, and emotional aspects of life.

Over the past four decades, more and more Aboriginal people are reclaiming their cultural identities and traditional healing often serves as the beginning of the journey into cultural re-education and re-claiming (reclamation), as well as holistic wellness (Absolon, 2010). Many indigenous Canadian scholars believe that the only way for Aboriginal people to truly heal the intergenerational trauma that has been imposed upon them is through traditional healing that attends to the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental aspects of the self (Abadian, 1999; Absolon, 2010; Connors, 1995; Cote-Meek, 2014; Duran & Duran, 1995; Hill, 2014; Hill & Coady, 2003; Pierce & Rhine, 1995; Smith, 1999).

This type of healing comes from rich cultural ceremonial practices such as the sweatlodge ceremony (Benton-Banai, 1988; Hill & Coady, 2003; Smith, 2005), healing lodges and circles (Antone & Hill, 1990; Connors, 1995; Dessertine & Metallic, 1990; Hill & Coady, 2003; Hollow Water First Nation, 1984; Meawasige, 1995), and the continuous journey toward bimaadiziwin or “the good life” (Gross, 2002; Hart, 1999, 2002). The people who currently provide these types of services possess a great deal of wisdom and considerable amounts of cultural teachings. They also carry an enormous responsibility to maintain their personal health and to facilitate the journeys of other people toward personal health and spiritual growth. The Indigenous Canadian healing movement has arisen from the belief that traditional healing practices are the best ways to help Indigenous Canadian people heal from the effects of the traumas and violence of colonization (Hill & Coady, 2003).

Traditional healers work in a very different way than mainstream social workers or even aboriginal social workers. The methods are different, the work is more involved, and it is not time-limited (Poonwassie & Charter, 2005). Holistic healing calls for a developed level of self-knowledge, self-awareness, and self-reflexivity. It calls for full participation by the healer along a guided journey of healing for both the recipient and the healer. This may include activities such as walking, grocery shopping for appropriate foods, breathing lessons, praying, and ceremonies that heal the emotional and spiritual hurts of aboriginal people.

Traditional healing practices have been a large part of the Indigenous Canadian healing movement that has sought to help reconnect aboriginal people with their cultural values and

practices and to help them heal from the various traumas of colonization (Solomon & Wane, 2005).

This study of traditional healers' understandings of health and healing was part of a larger study, (Hill, 2008) which sought to understand a broader range of aspects related to the practice of traditional healing in the Canadian context. Other findings from the larger study will be presented in subsequent articles, as they are too large to be presented in a single article.

Participants

The sixteen participants in this study were respected people within their communities who used primarily traditional healing methods (i.e., sweatlodge, healing circles, medicines, ceremonies) in their personal and professional healing work. The sample was comprised of 11 women and 5 men from Anishnaabe, Cree, Haudonosaunee, Inuu, Inuit, and Payute cultures. They ranged in age from 27 years to 70 years, with a mean age of 48 years. All participants viewed themselves as traditional people who live by the ancient teachings and traditions of their cultures.

Participants were contacted by the researcher using traditional protocol in order to ensure that the interviews were conducted in a good way. Participants were approached with tobacco in cloth, which was traditionally used by indigenous people to pray on a request, and asked to share their knowledge with the researcher.

A purposeful sampling procedure began by accessing people who were familiar to the researcher. Two of the participants and one additional Elder acted as key informants who then facilitated a fruitful process of snowball sampling (Patton, 2002).

Design and Procedure

Data Collection

Most participants were interviewed twice by the researcher, who himself was a part of the traditional healing movement, and had training as a research interviewer in his social work practice background, as well as through research assistant experience. The focus of the first interview was to explain the purpose of the study, establish suitability for the study, and present participants with the interview guide, information letter, and consent form. Some participants insisted on conducting the data collection interview immediately, and their requests were honoured.

The second interview for each participant, or first interview for some, was audio-recorded. The interviews ranged from approximately three hours to seven-and-a-half hours in

length. Discussion of the questions of concern to this paper (e.g., What does healing mean for you?; Could you tell me about the healing work you do for yourself and with others?) comprised approximately half the interview time.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim from the audio-recordings by the researcher and the transcripts were presented in person to the participants for their approval and comments. This made space for participants to correct phrasing and intent of their interview content. Most participants did not wish to review the transcripts from their interviews.

Some of the interviews were conducted on First Nation land while others were conducted in urban centres across Southern Ontario and Quebec, within a radius of 700 kilometres from Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. The data collection stage of the study lasted approximately ten months.

Data Analysis

Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher attended ceremonies on a regular basis, used medicines on a daily basis, sat in circle several times each week and consulted Elders regularly. This adherence to traditional healing practices ensured that the spirit and intent of the research were carried forward in a good way. As the researcher wrote this paper he engaged in the use of medicines to help him present these words in a good way.

First, transcripts were read a number of times in order to develop intimate familiarity with the data. Second, each transcript was analyzed in detail. Third, data analysis developed from open coding through a manual micro-analysis, to development of themes and sub-themes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The coding was based on the researcher's own classification scheme (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Analysis began after the first interview, and continued through the remainder of the data collection process using a constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1999) to ensure reflexive questioning.

Understanding Of Traditional Health And Healing

There are 2 themes that comprise Healers' Understanding of Traditional Health and Healing, Principles of Health and Healing, and Holistic Aspects of Health and Healing. Each of these themes has a number of sub-themes (see table 1). As participants described the meaning health and healing had for them, they asserted that "vigilance and sacrifice is involved" and they are "actively working" on themselves. They are then "able to help with integrity."

Principles of Traditional Health and Healing

The understanding of traditional health and healing encompasses a wide variety of principles. What follows is the discussion of five central principles that emerged from the data: vision/purpose, forgiveness, living the teachings each day, walking the Red Road, and striving for, and maintaining peace, wellness and balance each day.

Table 1: Understanding of Traditional Health and Healing

Understanding of Traditional Health and Healing

Principles of Traditional Health and Healing

Vision/purpose

Forgiveness

Living the teachings each day

Walking the red road

Striving for and maintaining peace, wellness and balance each day

Holistic Aspects of Traditional Health and Healing

Emotional

Spiritual

Physical

Mental

Vision/purpose. Vision/Purpose is a sub-theme that was pervasive throughout the data related to understanding health and healing. In the Anishnaabe tradition, young men and women go through their rites of passage into adulthood. This often involves ceremonies that include vision quests or lodge construction, wherein the conditions are created for each individual's Creator-given purpose to be revealed to them. It should be noted, however, that despite the correct conditions, some people do not experience what is typically understood as a vision. Albert shared his experience of these ceremonies:

When we were young we had rites of passage like the vision quest and the first hunt with our fathers and uncles and maybe even our grandfathers. You know even if we weren't meant to live in the traditional way, we still had purpose in our lives.

This traditional understanding of vision and purpose are common across Indigenous Canadian cultures and provide the starting point for each person's life journey. Participants spoke of the importance of having some vision and purpose in life for their own healing work, as well as that which they facilitate with others.

While much of the focus in the discussion of vision/purpose was specifically on Indigenous Canadian youth, participants spoke quite strongly about how the issue of a lack of

vision/purpose affects all ages of Indigenous Canadian people. Shawn became impassioned as he shared the following:

The work that I do is with children, some are forty-year-old children and others are sixty-year-old children. They have no vision for their life and they wander around, you know, some of them are homeless and they just need to find the purpose in their life. It's truly the very beginning of healing; having that vision and purpose in life.

Forgiveness. If facilitating vision/purpose is the beginning of traditional healing and health, then it is forgiveness that acts as a bookend to this journey. Teaching forgiveness forms part of the traditional teachings and is taught throughout the lifespan.

Healers included the power of forgiveness when sharing their understandings of healing. Gillian shared: "Forgiveness is such a healing force. It really frees you from that dark, angry force. Telling somebody who has hurt you, 'I forgive you,' with deep sincerity is just so powerful." Some participants suffered severe physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual and mental abuse at the hands of the administrators and staff of residential and boarding schools. William shared his wisdom from his experience of such abuse:

You know what I've learned? Only I had the power to set both of us free from that sick relationship of abuse. By offering my abuser my forgiveness, I felt balance and peace return to my spirit that wasn't there for a long time, probably since before I was abused. It just came back and a huge weight was lifted off me. This has become an important part of the work I do with others.

Living the teachings each day. Participants spoke of the importance of not only knowing one's teachings but of living those teachings in their everyday life. For example, Alice asserted: "You can't just use the teachings in your life when it is convenient for you. It is a way of life and you need to honour them each day. I'm not a traditional person one day and then a different person the next just because it is hard to live the teachings." Another participant shared that:

I am always conscious of the fact that everyone is watching me all the time. If I want anyone to respect me as a healing person, I know that I have to live the teachings every minute of every day.

Walking the red road (sobriety). Walking the Red Road is generally understood by Indigenous people to mean that a person abstains from using alcohol and drugs; however, it has grown to include other addictions such as gambling and sex. Participants, with few exceptions, shared that walking the Red Road is fundamental to traditional health and healing.

Several participants spoke of their experiences of drinking and drugging and the importance of finding the Red Road. Cynthia shared that: Drugs are killing our children and booze is killing them with all the drunk driving accidents in our communities and then our traditional people aren't quite the same presence they were, you know, and so we have to be that healthy presence. That's what's been given to us to do. We have to help the next generation find the Red Road.

Shawn spoke of his struggle and the need for helpers to do the work with the young people around addictions: "I run into people all the time who have no idea what they are doing to themselves or even where they are most of the time. It is absolutely critical that people live sober lives. Being drunk or stoned just isn't our way as indigenous people."

Two participants had somewhat different opinions on sobriety. Though both participants lead sober lifestyles, they did not profess to know what the right way is. Margaret expressed "Some people need drugs or booze to be able to deal with the intensity of their visions." Jonathan expressed that he doesn't judge people who have addictions: "If they don't have a problem with alcohol or drugs and by that I mean that it isn't having negative effects on their relationships or jobs or life in general, then they don't need to heal from that."

Striving for and maintaining peace, wellness and balance each day. Cynthia spoke about her understanding of traditional life: "We all struggle to walk a straight path each day and . . . it is the constant daily struggle that is the good way of living." Other participants spoke generally about this struggle to achieve, and then maintain, peace, wellness and balance in their everyday lives and how peace, wellness and balance is an important goal of the people they work with. Alice shared her wisdom about the understanding of balance and peace as a part of traditional health and healing:

You know, this whole belief about being perfectly balanced or totally at peace is an illusion. Seriously, it's impossible. To be perfectly honest with you, I used to think that way but I always felt bad that I was never at peace or balanced no matter what I did. Everyone struggles with it but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try. It's still important to fight that healing fight within yourself and with others but we are so hard on ourselves, especially the young ones.

Rebecca shared her perspective on peace and balance: "I don't know if I've ever been 'balanced' or perfectly at peace but I sure know when I'm out of balance or not at peace. I know I have to do something to straighten me out."

Regardless of their views about the attainability of such a state, all participants spoke about striving for peace, wellness and balance as foundational to their understanding of traditional healing and health.

Holistic Aspects of Traditional Health and Healing

When asked the question, “What does healing mean for you?” most participants immediately engaged in a discussion about the four aspects of a holistic self: spiritual, emotional, physical and mental (Absolon, 2010; Hill, 2014; Nabigon, 2006). Although the participants talked about the four aspects of holism in different sequences and with different emphases, they all conveyed similar understandings of holism in traditional healing. The presentation of the holistic aspects begins with the emotional aspect, followed by the spiritual aspect, then the physical aspect and lastly, the mental aspect. This is the predominant order in which they were shared.

Emotional. Participants shared that common Indigenous “experiences of inherited trauma seem to leave people confused about how to contextualize the suffering that is all around them, and helping people through the grief is a large part of the work.”

William spoke of the experiences of childhood that “hold back a lot of people from living in a good way. We are taught not to feel. You know the three rules, eh? Don’t feel, don’t cry and don’t speak.”

Participants spoke of how most Indigenous people find themselves at some point in their lives, in need of emotional exploration and self-discovery to heal those hurts that they have inherited. Elizabeth summed up the need for continued self-discovery and emotional health:

One of the most important lessons that we have to learn as traditional helpers is that we have to continue to look under every stone and look at ourselves and dig up all that stuff and deal with it. I know that we all have to do that work because we’ve all been traumatized by colonization.

Participants spoke of the intensive emotional healing work they do with others and articulated the teaching on emotions as a gift from the Creator:

The Creator gave us emotions so that we are affected by, and can relate to, other aspects of Creation. The greatest gift is being able to feel those emotions. We need to learn how to attend to our emotions and feel them at the very moment they are happening.

One indicator of emotional health with Indigenous people is the ability to laugh and joke and use humour. William shared an important teaching of his people about humour: “It is important that we laugh and joke. So much healing comes from humour.”

Participants spoke of love as the universal teaching across cultures. They commented that although this is a fundamental teaching, so many people cannot feel the emotion of love. Shannon offered: "In traditional healing, love is the basis of it all. And, you know, sometimes I need to remind myself that the reason I do this work is because of the love I feel from the Creator and the love I feel for my people." Building on this idea, Gillian conveyed: "We need to feel love, both giving and receiving, to not only keep up the healing work we do but to feel alive."

Spiritual. Healers identified the spiritual aspect of traditional healing as the critical piece to identity and resilience in life. They explained that this is also about building resources that feed the spirit, such as prayer, traditions, teachings, medicines, relationships, sacred items and connections with the spirit world, and the Creator. The varied understandings of spirituality and the spiritual aspect of holism were rooted in their traditional teachings as well as personal experience with spirits and the use of prayer and medicines to heal or help others.

Rebecca spoke of the connection with Creation as an essential part of the work she does: "There's just this powerful sense of belonging in nature so I make a point to walk with people by the river. Maybe they'll hear or see or feel something that they've never experienced before. That is holistic healing to me."

Healers all spoke about the spiritual aspect as being *the* principal aspect. Albert shared his thoughts on the spirit: "The connection with the Creator and the Creation all around you has to come first before all those other things. That's that spiritual part of the balance that we're all searching for."

Another common spiritual understanding was the communication with spirits and the spirit world. Jonathan spoke about the importance of this communication: "My people have always drawn on the power of the spirit to guide their lives, heal their people and maintain a healthy balance in all things. We do that every day, you know."

James spoke about the communication that he has with the medicines and the plants that he works with:

I have to be ever mindful of the spirit of the plants and how those spirits work together in whatever remedy I'm making. It has nothing to do with me. I'm just the Creator's helper. It is the spirit in those medicines that do the healing work.

Elizabeth shared that her work is that of the spirit and that she communicates with spirits of her ancestors on a daily basis:

What I do is spirit work. I look at people and I can see what is going on with them and where their particular illness is. It's because their spirits tell me when their physical beings are unable to. So, I use my spirit to help their spirits.

Physical. The physical aspect of holism relates to how traditional healers value physical health and how they help their clients to heal in physical ways. They shared about the "importance of a strong body" and about "building endurance to run the helping marathon." William spoke about how vital diet and taking care of the physical self are in the traditional healing world: "We need to take care to eat properly because we're dying from diabetes and stuff, move away from the grease, flour and preservatives."

Several participants spoke about the importance of "walking in a good way" and Shawn spoke specifically about walking in a good way as the physical actions that represent the spiritual, emotional and mental intentions: "Walking in a good way to me means that you have integrity as a person. Integrity is walking your talk, and only talking about what you know."

Although most of the participants shared the understanding of health as a process of getting physically well and maintaining that level of physical wellness, one participant, Alice, shared a different meaning from the rest of the participants. "Healing isn't the absence of illness. To me, it's actually the ability to cope from day to day with whatever disease or illness you may have so that you can continue to help others."

Mental. Overall, healers expressed the view that the mental aspect of holism in traditional healing is the ongoing generation of wisdom. According to William "We have the ability to reflect on what we've done and make changes for the future. That is wisdom, and it is more than just survival instinct." As a component of generating wisdom, Sally expressed the importance of ongoing education:

Our people are so disadvantaged because they stop learning and they give up. It makes me angry sometimes but I know what I have to do to help. We need to keep searching for knowledge and teachings. I can't say how important higher education is to our communities so that we can do for ourselves.

Wanda expressed the importance of "harnessing the true power of the mind to control your own life." Similarly, Shawn spoke about the importance of a positive mind in the healing of the self:

It doesn't matter how many ceremonies you go to or how much you smudge. If you don't have a positive outlook and that positive mind, your whole self is affected, so you need to heal the mental aspect to the point where it is in a good positive way.

Healers spoke further about the healing power of the mind. James, a medicine man, shared that "There is no illness that can't be overcome when you use the power of your mind."

Margaret spoke about doing what needs to be done in order to stay mentally strong:

Sometimes my mind can weaken and that affects my spirit and then everything goes to hell. So, I go to my helpers and ask them to help me so that I can keep up the healing work that I do. Sometimes they point me in the right direction but they never give me the answers because it is the belief that we all have that power in our minds to find the answers for ourselves.

Participants conveyed the “need for healthy stimulation of the mind” as one element of holistic healing, but also warned against “overstimulation of the mind.” Helen shared:

You know people don’t seem to understand that continuous learning throughout your life makes you healthy. I know, too, that there are some people I work with who never shut off their brains. It’s like they don’t know how, and they are so stimulated that they get sick all the time. So I think it’s about finding a balance that allows you to be stimulated but healthy at the same time.

Conclusions

Traditional healing has existed in North America in various forms for millennia. These practices continue to survive today in First Nations and Urban Aboriginal communities, as Indigenous people find themselves more in need of such healing than ever before. The practitioners of traditional healing live in these communities and do invaluable healing work with people.

As articulated throughout this paper, the process of healing requires the use of a traditional healing approach. Participant emphasized that Traditional Healing is intricately connected with faith and spirit and that it requires the use of methods that connect the client with Creation and the Creator, such as praying, use of ceremonies, the use of medicines, and the use of elders.

Indigenous people are still struggling to heal the damaging effects of colonization such as residential schools, and the intergenerational trauma that affects every Indigenous person. These issues continue to illustrate the context of social problems affecting Indigenous people, and demonstrate the ever-increasing need for holistic healing. Healing is no longer a choice for Indigenous people; it is a necessity for survival. There needs to be a greater focus on developing and implementing holistic healing programs aimed at reclamation and revitalization of Indigenous Canadian identity and culture.

Sixteen healers shared their stories with me about doing this difficult work “in the trenches” of their communities: urban Aboriginal or rural First Nations. Each, in turn, expressed

that there are four aspects to holistic health and healing: emotional, spiritual, physical and mental, and that each aspect needs specific and careful attention. As articulated throughout this paper, their traditional healing work attends to each aspect in turn, striving toward balance and harmony. All my relations¹.

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¹ All My Relations is a show of respect to those who have contributed to your journey, your knowing, your being, your seeing, your doing capacities, and to the Creator and Spirits who guide you. We typically acknowledge the work of other Indigenous people and the trailblazers whose work we may inadvertently borrow without citation - it is about relational accountability, and a statement of humility.

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*Aboriginal Social Work: Incorporating Aboriginal Worldviews in Social Work Field Practice*¹

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Abstract

This paper discusses the development and positioning of a Native² social work program, and why it was established within a mainstream University institute. It will focus on the discourse associated with Aboriginal social work worldviews and the positioning of curricula established by Aboriginal communities to adapt to mainstream academia. This paper will also show how Aboriginal Teachings are utilized as “theory to practice” models and provide examples and insights into how students are incorporating Aboriginal worldviews in their field placements.

About the Authors

In Aboriginal and Maori³ Teachings it is customary to introduce oneself, who they are and where they come from.

Kia ora, Aanii, Greetings. My name is Taima Moeke-Pickering and I am a *Maori* from *Aotearoa*, New Zealand. I am from the Ngati Pukeko and Tuhoe tribes. I have been teaching on the Native Human Services social work program since 2006. My Ph.D. thesis focused on Indigenous-based helping professional programs identifying strengths/barriers to Indigenous communities, graduates and the social work and counselling profession. One of the case studies that I researched was on the Native Human Services HBSW program.

Boozhoo; Aanii; Sago; Wachiya; KweKwe; Bonjour; Greetings. Baybaamoosay-Kwe n'dishnakaz. My name is Cheryle Partridge. I am known by my Spirit / Anishinaabe name as, Woman Who Leaves Healing Tracks. *Migiizii n'dodem.* I belong to the Eagle Clan. *N'winiishoo*

¹ This article is a translation of an article first published in French in *Reflets, Revue d'intervention sociale et communautaire*, Vol.20, number 1, pp. 150-169. Original title “Service social autochtone – Incorporer la vision autochtone du monde dans les stages pratiques en service social”. Published here in English with permission.

² For the purposes of this paper the words Native and Aboriginal will be used interchangeably throughout this document. Aboriginal peoples are Indigenous to Turtle Island/Canada

³ Maori are the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Midewiwin Kwe. I am a Second-Degree Midewiwin woman. *Anishinaabe miinwaa Pottawatomi n'dow.* I am of Ojibwe and Pottawatomi descent. *Wasauksing miinwaa Sudbury n'donjibaa.* I am from Wasauksing First Nation and I live and work in Sudbury. I am a daughter, sister, niece, partner, friend, mother, auntie, grandmother, and great-grandmother. I am a graduate of the School of Native Human Services Honours Social Work program and have taught in the School of Native Human Services since 1999.

Introduction

The Americas are an ensouled and enchanted geography, and the relationship of Indian people to this geography embodies a "theology of place," reflecting the very essence of what may be called spiritual ecology. American Indians' traditional relationship to and participation with the landscape includes not only the land itself but the way in which they have perceived themselves and all else (Cajete, 1999, p. 3).

Cajete (1999) eloquently references the importance of land, people and traditions as a way to understand the relational worldview of First Peoples. Borrowing from his frame of reference, it is important to provide the place and history of how the Native Human Services social work program came to be established, the unique position that the program occupies in the larger institution of Laurentian University and the position of Aboriginal worldviews in relation to social work education. The second part of this paper provides insight into examples of Aboriginal worldviews such as the Medicine Wheel Teachings and how these concepts are integrated into theory and practice within the program. The third part provides insight about traditional Teachings and student preparation for field practice.

Setting the Context: Overview of the development of the School of Native Human Services Social Work Program

Led by a small group who were concerned by negative disparities in social work practices as applied to Aboriginal clientele and aware that there was a lack of Aboriginal Social Workers, this group of three began to foster the idea of developing an Aboriginal social work program (Alcoze & Mawhiney, 1988). As a starting point, they canvassed support from Aboriginal faculty, Aboriginal communities and other empathetic social work and academic colleagues for ideas. In 1985, there was extensive consultation with Aboriginal communities mainly from the 27 Robinson-Huron communities in Ontario. The consultations confirmed unequivocally that change in Social Work training was needed. By 1986, a team of people were hired to gather further information about the design of a new Aboriginal social work program. These consultations confirmed that the program should have a strong Aboriginal content and that the program carried the same academic standing as the existing social work degree at Laurentian

University (Alcoze & Mawhiney, 1988; Faries, 1994). A small team designed the courses to reflect an Aboriginal culture specific social work program.

In 1987, the team advanced the proposed new program through the Laurentian University academic system. They took the initiative to schedule informal meetings with key university stakeholders who would be involved at various stages of the approval process and in particular they wanted to be prepared to solve any potential barriers that might arise. The informal meetings contributed greatly to the relative ease with which the new program proposal moved through the formalities of the academic approval process. The name bestowed on the new program was Native Human Services. This new Native social work program was given unanimous approval by all the relevant committees. On December 10, 1987, the Laurentian University Senate endorsed and approved the Native Human Services specialization in the Honours Bachelor of Social Work (HBSW) program (Alcoze & Mawhiney, 1988).

The program started in 1988 and was based in the School of Social Work which had three streams: Anglophone, Francophone and Native at that time. The Native Human Services program provided two delivery modes of teaching 1) full-time on-campus program and 2) the part-time distance education program. The first cohort of students started in 1988. In 1992, four years after the program was launched, the faculty adopted the Seven Grandfather Teachings as a Native Code of Ethics to be used alongside the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (Odjig-White, 1992).

In the early consultations with Aboriginal communities, their vision was for the Native Human Services program to be a stand-alone school. During 2007, there was an opportunity to fulfill their vision. Many discussions were held with faculty and staff during 2007 for Native Human Services to become a stand-alone school (Native Human Services Accreditation Committee, 2008). In June 2008, the Laurentian University Senate approved the Native Human Services Unit to become a School of Native Human Services separate from the School of Social Work and the other two streams (Anglophone and Francophone). In April 2008, the School of Native Human Services with the support of Laurentian University, applied for stand-alone accreditation with the Canadian Association of Social Work Educators (CASWE). Formal accreditation was granted in January 2009. This also meant establishing a Director position (Native Human Services Accreditation Committee, 2008).

In summary, the School of Native Human Services is one of two stand-alone Aboriginal-based social work programs that have been accredited by CASWE in Canada. Aboriginal and social work worldviews and theories are integrated into the curriculum. This program draws its Teachings and practice from Aboriginal traditions and culture. The Seven Grandfather Teachings and the Medicine Wheel Teachings are an integral cultural and theoretical underpinning for social work knowledge and skills as well as ethical practice in field placements (Odjig-White, 1992). The program promotes Aboriginal culture and worldviews as an important

body of knowledge and centers health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities as being important sources to guide Aboriginal social work practice (Moeke-Pickering, 2010). Today, the School of Native Human Services continues to deliver the Honours Native social work bachelor degree. The program is now in its 25th year.

Integrating Aboriginal worldviews into the curriculum

Many Aboriginal social workers have been actively asserting the importance and rightful place of Aboriginal worldviews in social work education and practice (Baskin, 2006; Hart 2010; Hart, 2003; Nabigon & Mawhinney, 1996; Sinclair, 2003). Hart (2010) describes a worldview as “mental lenses that are entrenched ways of perceiving the world” (p. 2). Further, that an Aboriginal worldview encompasses many aspects, including a close relationship with the land, one’s culture and community, relationships and connections to living and non-living beings and entities (Hart, 2010). Sinclair (2003) and Baskin (2006) add that an Aboriginal worldview must also incorporate an understanding of colonization and its effects on Aboriginal peoples and their traditions. This implies that an Aboriginal worldview consists of both traditional Aboriginal knowledges and practices as well as integrates a critical analysis of the impact of colonization. Therefore, Aboriginal social work has evolved and interwoven Aboriginal worldviews as an integral approach to social work practice and theories (Baskin, 2006; Hart, 2010; Nabigon & Mawhinney, 1996; Moeke-Pickering, 2010, Sinclair, 2003).

In the School of Native Human Services program, an Aboriginal worldview provides the main frame of reference for teachings, theories, understanding and practice. The curriculum centres on Aboriginal-based and social work knowledge and skills, the main worldview and pedagogy in the classroom is centered on Aboriginal peoples, their way of life, their traditions, knowledge and approaches (Moeke-Pickering, 2010). The faculty are “encouraged to intertwine the traditional and social systems within the Native community with formal social work training” (Alcoze & Mawhiney, 1998). The program mission gives emphasis to the guidance of Aboriginal Teachings, in particular the Seven Grandfather and the Medicine Wheel Teachings. These particular Teachings are inherent traditions practiced by those Nations within the Ontario tribal territories and are also pertinent because that is where the School and program is situated. The next section provides a brief account of how the Medicine Wheel Teachings and Smudging can be taught in the classroom.

Incorporating the Medicine Wheel Teachings: From theory to practice

The School of Native Human Services uses the Medicine Wheel Teachings in many ways. Our theory of social work practice is embedded within, and when we study the “Teachings” we are able to see how all things are interconnected and interrelated. These Teachings provide a framework for helping others. The Medicine Wheel is used in our classrooms and in field education and when students have completed their degree – they take it

to their work environment, whether that be on a reserve or in an urban setting (Native Human Services Accreditation Committee, 2008; Odjig-White, 1992). One of the highlights worth mentioning regarding the Teachings is the inclusivity that runs throughout. It is not only for Aboriginal/Indigenous peoples, it is for all peoples.

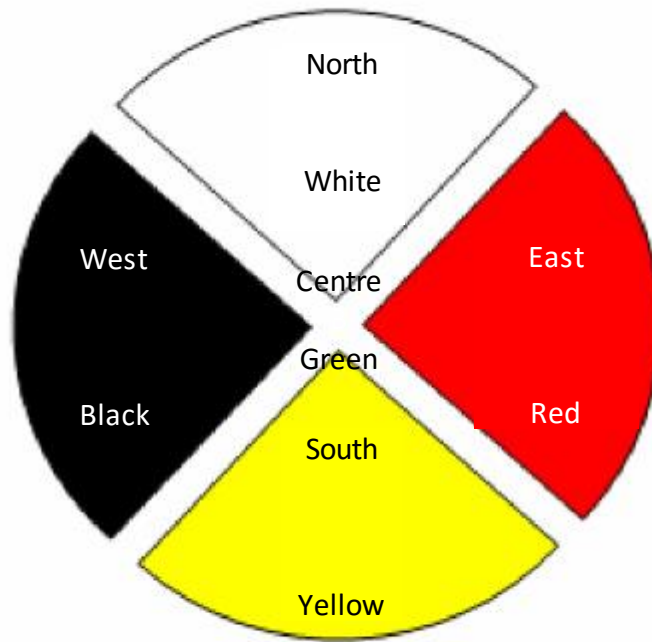
Some of the Teachings contained within the Medicine Wheel framework are:

- ❖ The four cardinal directions; East, South, West and North. The directions seem to be self-explanatory but, for example, knowing the directions will tell you which way to go if you are lost by looking at the sunrise or sunset.
- ❖ The four human aspects; Spiritual, Emotional, Physical and Mental/Intellectual. Although these aspects are given different names they are all contained within the human vessel and one cannot take out one element completely or in the case of western medicine treat one element without affecting the whole. Our healers know this and treat the individual holistically to bring them back to wellness.
- ❖ The four key periods of the life cycle; Birth/Infancy, Childhood/Youth, Adulthood, and Senior/Elderhood. Each cycle builds upon the next and all are connected. One could look at Erikson's emotional life cycle by means of the Medicine Wheel to see the connections and relationships that we have with each stage of our lives.
- ❖ The four races of man; Red, Yellow, Black, and White. It always seems to surprise non-Indigenous peoples when they see that no one is excluded from the wheel of life.
- ❖ The four primary elements; mineral/earth, fire, water, and wind/air. These are all part of the physical world and each one in its own way is distinctive and powerful and we need these gifts to sustain all life.
- ❖ The four seasons; Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. We are fortunate to have such distinct and noticeably different times of the year. Our ceremonies follow the changing seasons as they have from time immemorial. Calendars were never needed to let us know when to celebrate the gathering of the harvest, or the preparations for a long winter, or to celebrate with Shkagamik-Kwe (Mother Earth), when her glorious shades of greens, reds, yellows, pinks, oranges, whites, and all colours of the rainbow come back to clothe her every spring.
- ❖ The four sacred medicines; tobacco, cedar, sage and sweetgrass. The Teachings tell us that G'Chi-Manido (Great Spirit/Creator) gave Aboriginal peoples tobacco as the first sacred medicine. Tobacco was given to us so we could use it to gather the other sacred medicines. We simply put a little tobacco in our left hand (closest to our heart) and tell G'Chi-Manido and the medicine what we are going to use it for before we pick it and end

its life (eg. We could be using it for a sweat or for a cedar bath, etc.). The same goes for sage and sweetgrass, we may be picking it to use it for the cleansing ceremony known as smudging. We offer prayers of gratitude.

- ❖ The four directions of Indigenous intelligence; way of seeing, way of relating, way of thinking, way of being. Way of seeing – is spirit-centred; Way of relating – is an all-encompassing way of relating to the universe; Way of thinking – uses the totality of the mind and the heart; Way of being – is the total response of the total person to the total environment.
- ❖ The four human characteristics plus the centre; feelings, relationships, respect, caring and healing. These are interconnected with the five rascals as listed below.
- ❖ The “five rascals” of human characteristics plus the centre; inferiority, envy, resentment, not caring and jealousy.
- ❖ The plants, animals and the cosmos are also included in the medicine wheel. (Bopp, Bopp, Lane & Brown, 1985, p. 9 & 11; Cahill & Halpern, 1990, p. 41; Dumont, 2006, pp. 24 & 25; Hart, 2002, p. 40; Mussell, Nicholls & Adler, 1991, p. 53; Nabigon, 2006, pp. 39 & 115-118; Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996, p. 29; Pheasant-Williams, 2003, p. 82).

Below is an example of the Medicine Wheel which encompasses the four Cardinal Directions and the legend explains where human characteristics such as feelings are situated on the wheel. This particular Medicine Wheel was shared to the program by respected Professor and Elder Herb Nabigon (1993).



LEGEND:

East – Feelings, Beginning

South - Relationships, Time

West - Respect, Reflection

North - Movement, Action

Centre – Balance, Healing

Adapted from: Nabigon, 1993, pp. 141-143

**Putting the Medicine Wheel Teachings into Practice - Using the Four Cardinal Directions:
From theory to practice**

Below is a small example of how to use the Teachings (drawing on the Medicine Wheel illustration above) by incorporating the Four Cardinal Directions (East, South, West and North) into one's practice.

- ❖ **Beginning in the East** – when a client comes into the office, this heralds the introduction of worker and service user. The worker is able to see how the service user feels about him/her self, just by looking. They may be slouched over, clothes wrinkled, hair disheveled and eyes not quite meeting yours and mumbling a greeting. The worker may quickly think this person looks and acts as if they might have low self-esteem.
- ❖ **Moving sunwise to the South** – this is where relationships are worked on. You find out why they have come to see you. It will take time to create a good helping relationship. You create an atmosphere conducive to relationship-building with comfortable chairs, credentials framed on the walls, perhaps a hint of the scent of soothing medicines (sweetgrass/cedar/sage), and your well-modulated voice speaking to the service user.
- ❖ **Moving sunwise to the West** – this is where the service user is telling their story about why they have come to see you. The nature of story-telling is such that they must reflect on what happened to them at different stages of their story. When they reflect, it tends to give them insight into why certain things happened to them. While they are talking, you are listening to them with every aspect of your being (spiritually, emotionally, physically, & mentally). In other words you are respecting them. “The literal meaning of respect is to look twice” (Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996, p. 24).
- ❖ **Moving sunwise to the North** – the service user realizes that you are listening with all your being and that you care what they are telling you. This realization helps move them to action. You may give them some tasks to do during the time until the next appointment. You may give them some affirmations to repeat to themselves every morning upon arising and upon going to bed. You are gently giving them a boost to their self-esteem before moving on to other issues. They sense that this will help them to move toward helping themselves.
- ❖ **Moving to the Centre** – the main purpose of the Centre is to seek or to be in “balance”. Throughout the relationship the person may at any given time find understanding, or peace, or enlightenment or an “aha” moment during the relationship building. Or, naturally at the end of your time together there is a moment where they reflect on what they shared and for that time be in an awareness of “balance”. When they go out into the world, life happens, however, you can share that the Medicine Wheel Teachings can be a tool for them to revisit to seek an understanding of any situation and across relationships (e.g. partner; children; work; challenges etc).

Incorporating Smudging and the Four Sacred Medicines: Tobacco, Cedar, Sage, and Sweetgrass: From theory to practice

Smudging as a practice is also incorporated into the classroom teachings. Spirituality is interconnected with everything we do, see, feel and know. Below is an overview of the four

sacred medicines tobacco, cedar, sage and sweetgrass and how smudging, cleansing and healing is integrated as a practice.

Tobacco / *Asemaa* – sits in the East on the Medicine Wheel. Tobacco is our most sacred medicine and was given to us by *G'Chi-Manido* (Great Spirit). It was our first medicine and is used when we gather our other sacred medicines, it enacts the Anishinaabe protocol of reciprocity (Toulouse, 2006). When you place *asemaa* in a sacred fire the smoke carries your thoughts and prayers straight to *G'Chi-Manido*. It is a very powerful medicine and you always use it when asking for anything or asking an Elder to do something for you such as find your Spirit name.

Cedar / *Gii-shekaan-dug* – sits in the South on the Medicine Wheel. When cedar is burned in a sacred fire it crackles and gives off a sweet and medicinal smell. You can use this to purify your body from disease and to protect you from negativity. *Gii-shekaan-dug* can be made into a healthful tea. It can also be used for Cedar Baths for healing in the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental aspects of your being.

Sage / *Mushko-day-wushk* – sits in the West on the Medicine Wheel. When sprinkled on a sacred fire, it has a powerful smell. You can use it to purify your body through smudging. You can pass the smoke over your head to clear away any negative thoughts that are present, you can pass the smoke over your eyes to help you see clearly, you can pass the smoke over your ears and mouth to ensure that you only hear positive words and to ensure that you only utter positive words. Lastly you pass the smoke over your body and your heart to ensure that you listen, feel, and speak from the heart. Another use of *Mushko-day-wushk* is to smudge your surroundings to keep your environment free of any lingering negativity.

Sweetgrass / *Wiin-gushk* – sits in the North on the Medicine Wheel and is also known as the “hair of Mother Earth.” When braided, *Wiin-gushk*, represents body, mind, and spirit. It also represents the strength of the Anishinaabek. You may use it to keep you safe on your travels by keeping a braid in your car, you can also smudge your car before embarking on a long trip. Another use of *Wiin-gushk* is to smudge your environment to cleanse it of any negativity which may be present.

Cheryle: I personally use the smudge in my classes before each class. Although we are not allowed to burn sacred medicines in the classroom (due to fire regulations) I have ‘adapted’ and use an oil of the sacred medicines and pour a small amount into an abalone shell. The scent of the medicines is there and I ask the students to use their imaginations and imagine the smoke coming from the shell and passing the ‘smoke’ over their heads and bodies to cleanse the stresses of everyday life away from themselves. I believe it works and we are able to start each class with a positive outlook.

Our main focus is the community and we know from experience many families/individuals are experiencing pain around addictions, domestic violence, suicide and general poor health. We are addressing this pain by understanding the Medicine Wheel Teachings around trust and respect. Our students tell us about how effective they become when they use these Teachings as individuals, with their families and communities and/or in their practice. The most difficult thing for many of our students is moving these Teachings from their head to their hearts. Grohowski (1995) calls this, the shift from cognitive or “head thinking” to affective or “heart thinking” and the efficacy of storytelling and prayer in traditional processes (p. 34). Elder Herb Nabigon, during oral Teachings, tells us that this is a very long journey to travel / integrate yet is attainable.

An overview of Native Human Services Field Program

The Native Human Services Field program is a proactive integration of learning that respects Aboriginal culture and seeks to expand the knowledge of cultural competence within the framework of social work field education.

“The values, traditions, belief systems, language, and customs of First Nations People are reaffirmed through a process of building community partnerships, agency affiliations, and organizational relationships” (Odjig-White, 1992, p. ix).

An Aboriginal worldview provides the overarching framework for theory to practice. The Medicine Wheel and Seven Grandfather Teachings provide a theory to practice model for working with colleagues, communities, families and individuals (Nabigon, 2006; Moeke-Pickering, 2010; Odjig-White, 1992).

As the program is situated under CASWE, the field education regulations apply. Therefore, the student is expected to complete a minimum of 700 Field Education hours:

NSWK 3605 E - a minimum of 300 hours consisting of 3 days per week of field instruction
NSWK 4605 E - a minimum of 400 hours consisting of 4 days per week of field instruction

The Native Human Services Field Manual

All students are provided with the Native Human Services field manual and all are expected to attend up to four preparatory sessions before they embark on their field placement. The Access Supervisor is responsible for preparing the students as well as engaging with faculty consultants and agencies. Students are provided with an explanation on the roles and

responsibilities of student/supervisor/faculty consultant, field objectives, field assessments and social work ethics. In particular, they are also taught about the Seven Grandfather Teachings as a code of ethics for field education.

“The Seven Teachings that were given to the Nishnaabe Nation will be the framework for the competency criteria which in actuality function as the Native Code of Ethics. “These values, defined by the primary motivators of the Native personality (the capacity for VISION and the quality of RESPECT), can be presented as the original traditional Native values” (Odjig-White, 1992, p. 13).

The Seven Grandfather Teachings are:

Nbwaakaawin ~ To cherish knowledge is to know WISDOM.

Zaagidwin ~ To know LOVE is to know peace.

Mnaadendmowin ~ To honour all the creation is to have RESPECT.

Aakdehewin ~ BRAVERY is to face the foe with integrity.

Gwekwaadziwin ~ HONESTY in facing a situation is to be brave.

Dbaadendiziwin ~ HUMILITY is to know yourself as a sacred part of the creation.

Debwewin ~ TRUTH is to know all of these things.

(Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 64).

The Seven Grandfather Teachings are used alongside the Social Work Code of Ethics. We keep them side-by-side to remind us that we must abide by what is contained within, as ethical and responsible social workers. They contain values that we strive to live by, not only in our practices but also in our professional and personal lives.

Within the field manual, is also the Medicine Wheel Teachings which are also a vital part of the field placement. The framework is a visual tool and is very effective when explaining to students their role in the field education process from an Aboriginal perspective. When working with the Medicine Wheel, students are informed, “It is believed that the Creator began life in the East” (Nabigon, 1992, p. 141). For example, the sun rises in the East and this heralds the birth of a new day. Therefore, the “entry point for the process of field education” (Corbiere-Johnston, 2009, p. 1) is in the East.

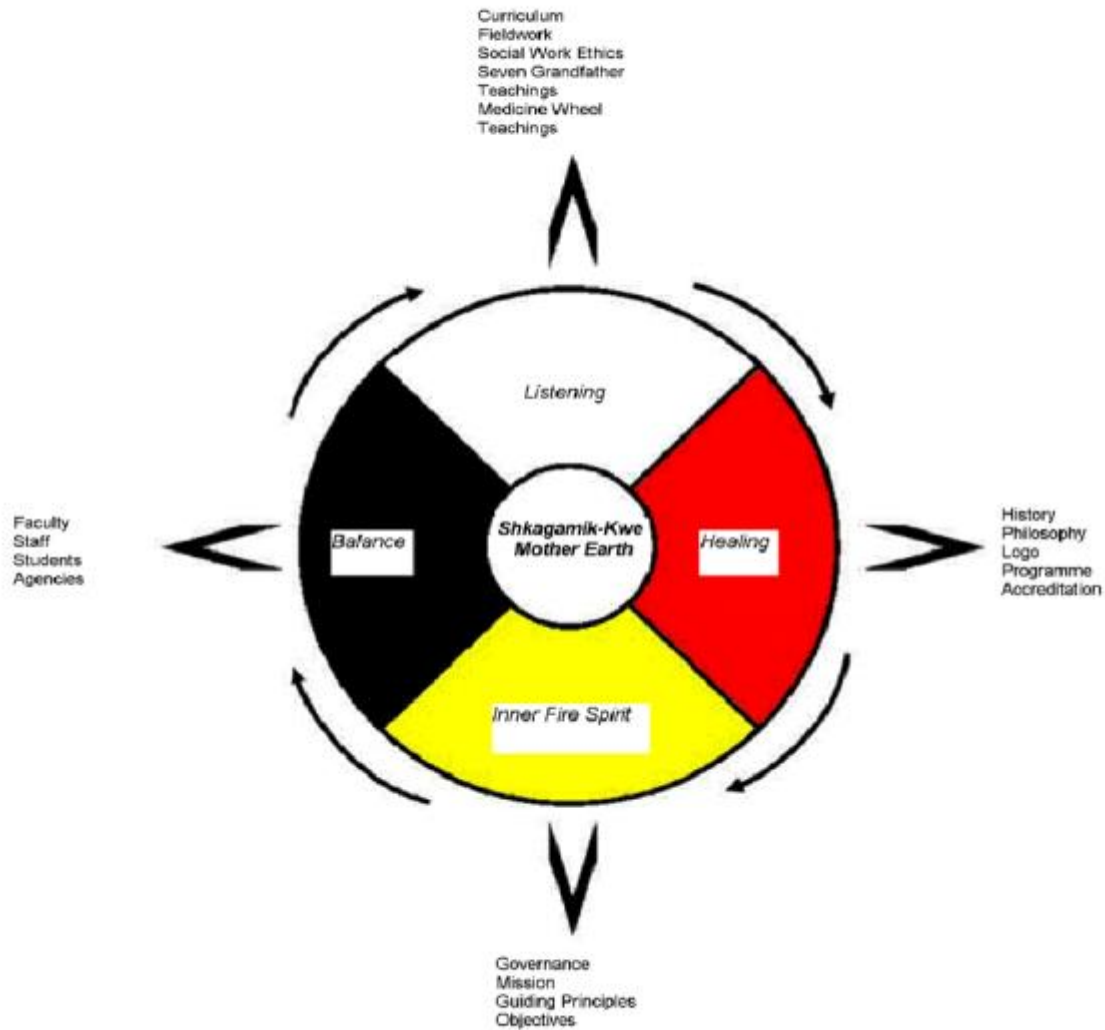
The various roles within the field education process can also be visualized using the Medicine Wheel Teachings. The roles, beginning in the East is the Access Supervisor, who maintains liaison and administrative support; in the South, is the Field Supervisor (Agency), who provides orientation, supervision and evaluation; in the West, is the Faculty Consultant, who

provides consultation and ensures student meets learning needs; and in the North, is the Student, “who develops a Learning Contract and takes responsibility for achieving the goals and objectives” (Corbiere-Johnston, 2009, p. 7). With this visual tool the student always knows whom to approach, if they came across any issue that needs clarification. The Access Supervisor upon providing agencies with a copy of the field manual takes the time to explain both the requirements of a social work field placement as well as clarifies an Aboriginal social work worldview. This is particularly helpful for mainstream agencies or for those supervisors wanting to understand how to support a student who is integrating Aboriginal worldviews in their field placements. Many mainstream agencies or those new to Aboriginal social work ways found this initial introduction helpful.

The Medicine Wheel diagram below shows the students all the relevant relationships that they may encounter in their field placement journey as well as their journey throughout their course of learning. It is also a visual tool to assist them to understand how the Medicine Wheel and Seven Grandfather Teachings can be integrated into their fieldwork practice.

Inclusivity of Aboriginal Worldviews for working across cultures

As mentioned earlier, “no one is excluded from the wheel of life”. Therefore, it is important for students to realize that Aboriginal worldviews and traditional Teachings prepare them to work with all cultural groups as well as Aboriginal peoples. These Teachings are reinforced within the Medicine Wheel and Seven Grandfather Teachings: that is to be respectful of all peoples whom you may encounter in one’s practice. Students are welcome to bring and incorporate all of their knowledge, experiences and cultural teachings into their learning and practice. The Teachings encourage a representation of knowledge and information from a variety of sources and worldviews. The program provides an environment where such knowledge and experiences can flourish. Likewise, the program supports the blending of traditional and Western knowledges as this offers students a wide array of information that will assist them in their practice and everyday lives. The implications for social work practice are that students take their knowledge and skills into agencies and to their families. Further, students become confident to integrate cross-cultural knowledge in a respectful and meaningful way in their field as well as practice.



Field Medicine Wheel and Relationships (School of Native Human Services Accreditation Committee, 2008).

Conclusion:

Just as our ancestors knew the interrelationships of things and lived their lives as brothers and sisters with all the animates and inanimates of the earth, the Ojibwe of today are slowly returning to these traditional values. These ways are ingrained in our ancestral memory (Peacock & Wisuri, 2002, p. 42).

The Native Human Services program values the place of an Aboriginal social work worldview. As the program is now 25 years old, we are encouraged that many students have fulfilled their field activities across many organizations and agencies throughout Sudbury and many areas in Ontario and Canada. Many agencies that have a “mainstream” focus have benefitted from having our students practice an Aboriginal social work worldview and some have recognized the value of Aboriginal social work and thus have incorporated the Seven Grandfather Teachings and/or the Medicine Wheel Teachings into their practices or policies (Moeke-Pickering, 2010).

Through the skills of the faculty and Elders they promote an inclusive Aboriginal worldview in the classroom that incorporates cultural ceremonies, encourages personal introspection and builds cultural and professional social work skills. Spirituality and cultural values are an important source for healing and wellbeing. This knowledge and skill is vital for working with Aboriginal communities and their families. Additionally, students feel supported and endorsed to apply Aboriginal Teachings as a theory to practice in their field placement and social work practice. Blending Aboriginal and social work skills and knowledge in their practice makes them unique in the social work field. Integrating an Aboriginal worldview into the curriculum increases the bi-cultural competence of the student (i.e. Aboriginal culture and social work) while at the same time, maintaining the broader vision for Aboriginal self-determination which is to provide better health, education and economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples (Moeke-Pickering, 2010). We stand proud in knowing that Aboriginal-based programs and many like it exist in academia. It illustrates just how resilient Aboriginal peoples are in education and the helping professions.

G’Chi-Miigwech/Kia ora, Cheryle and Taima

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An Experience of Food Security and Food Sovereignty in Northern Ontario

Marcie Romenco

Abstract

This article is based on the lived experience of a Cree student who is in the 4th year of her Indigenous Social Work degree at Laurentian University. Her field placement is focussed on the study of food security and food sovereignty under the supervision of Professor Taima Moeke-Pickering. Using her own narrative combined with food security and food sovereignty literature, she shares her Cree insights about the importance of living healthy and sustainable wellbeing for families and communities.

Introduction

The World Health Organization defines food security as existing “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”. Commonly, the concept of food security is defined as including both physical and economic access to food that meets people's dietary needs as well as their food preferences. (WHO, 1996). Food security is defined by three areas of assessment: food availability; sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis, food access; having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet, food use; appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care, as well as adequate water and sanitation. (WHO, 2015, “Food Security”)

Food security is a serious health issue for Indigenous people in Canada. (Desjardins, Hanning, Skinner & Tsuji, 2013). Indigenous people are comprised of First Nations, Metis and Inuit. First Nations are the largest of the three populations within the Indigenous group in Canada. 60% of First Nations people live off reserve in urban communities and small towns. (Statistics Canada Census, 2006). The statistics on food security in off reserve First Nations households is of great concern. 24% of Aboriginal households had a compromised diet (reduced quality and/or quantity) and 33% experienced food insecurity compared to 8.4% and 9% respectively across the rest of Canada. (Desjardins, Hanning, Skinner & Tsuji, 2013). The First Nations Regional Health Survey (Phase Two, 2008/10) found 54.2% of households surveyed were food insecure. The Inuit Health Survey (2008) determined that in 36 communities, food insecurity ranged from 45-69% from region to region. Food insecurity in Indigenous households has been associated with high levels of poverty, multi-family households, low levels of education, labour force participation, reliance on social assistance, and single parent households. (Kuhle, Raine, Vengellers & Willows, 2008). In the James Bay area of Northern Ontario, food security is further challenged because the area consists of remote isolated communities. There are three ways that food is procured: harvesting, sharing and eating traditional foods (goose and moose) and utilizing the market/store systems for commercial and store bought foods (Power, 2007). Despite the fact that Crees of James Bay

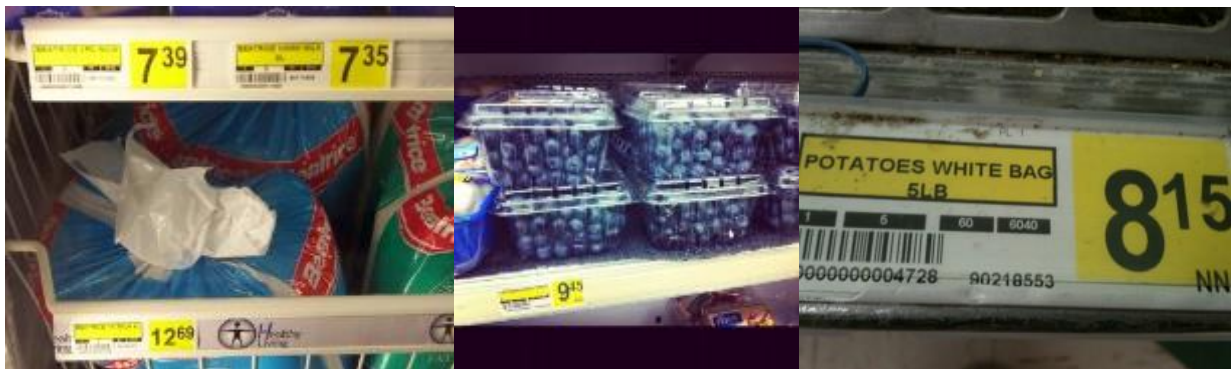
have access to both traditional foods and store bought foods, there are also concerns that the practice of traditional harvesting has decreased, therefore community and traditional knowledge is not being passed onto the younger generations. There are also growing concerns that climate change has already affected the bird and game populations (Richmond & Ross, 2009). Indigenous people who do harvest from the land have been saying that it is not known how long the current eco system will be able to sustain hunters and harvesters because the rate of resource development i.e. mining, in Northern Ontario is happening at a very fast pace (Desjardins et al, 2013). In addition to climate change, the cost of equipment and transportation of obtaining traditional food is also a barrier to the consumption of traditional foods (Lawn & Harvey, 2004).

As a Cree woman, for me, food security means healthy families and communities. It means being able to teach our younger generations how to live and thrive. Food security means love for ourselves and for our families. Many members of our community in Moosonee (map of area provided), Ontario hunt together and take great pride in being able to feed the community and provide for those, like our Elders, who cannot hunt and gather for themselves. Food security also means health. Much like shelter and clothing, when a family has food and isn't starving, they are better able to focus on wellness holistically, mind, body and spirit.



In my early childhood years my parents moved many times. I suppose you could say that we were transient until I was eight years old. My dad worked, but as a young father without post-secondary education he didn't make a comfortable living. My mother worked on and off, but because we moved so often, she had a hard time remaining employed anywhere for any length of time. That being said, I remember times where there was very little food in the house. I honestly do not know how my mother managed to raise two children back then. It's fair to say that we had very low food security in our home. We lived in some urban areas and some rural areas, but my parents never lived around extended family when I was a child. I also had no idea that we were Indigenous until my Dad accepted a job up at Moosonee, Ontario and we moved there. I came to find out that Moosonee was my mother's homeland and I had a lot of family up there and of course, that we are Native.

My parents made more money in the north, but the cost of living is also very high. Food costs are exorbitant to say the least. The cost of milk was almost \$10.00 a bag, bread was \$5.00 a loaf and so on. Below are examples of recent pictures of prices of milk, blueberries and potatoes.



Another issue experienced in isolated communities is the problem of transporting the food. Food is very expensive to ship via train, and that's how it gets to Moosonee. There is no highway. Food can take days to arrive, which brings about the next issue, food spoilage. A lot of the fresh produce usually looks pretty bad by the time it hits the produce aisle in the grocery store. Fresh produce gets trucked up to Cochrane, Ontario and then either the truck gets loaded onto a train flatcar, or the load gets forklifted into a boxcar. Either way, that food has travelled a long way and takes another day to travel north to Moosonee on the train. Food usually gets unloaded the next day. Shipping anything to Moosonee is a challenge. Goods that spoil especially do not last long and as well, they are expensive to purchase. All the added costs of shipping and delivery are factored into what we pay for food in the remote communities around James Bay.

I worked in a hotel and a bar in Moosonee for my husband's family. The hotel prices for obtaining shipped commercial food and goods was more than what the Northern Store company

was charged to bring produce and goods to the local grocery stores. What I learned was, the Northern Store Company's costs for shipping food to the North was subsidized by the Government (NNC, 2014). That this subsidy had been going on for years. We, the consumers have never been given a break on the cost of food even though that is the purpose of the subsidy. The Northern Store (North West Company) collects subsidy dollars from the Government of Canada's Nutrition North Canada program, yet the consumer is still forced to cover the cost of delivery as there are no discounted prices in stores that reflect that the transportation is subsidized.

In the book, "Food Sovereignty in Canada" Dawn Morrison explains the concept of Indigenous Food Sovereignty:

"Indigenous food sovereignty is the newest and the most innovative approach to achieving the end goal of long term food security in Indigenous communities. The Indigenous food sovereignty approach provides a model for social learning and thereby promotes the application of traditional knowledge, values, wisdom, and practices in the present day context. In an approach that all cultures can relate to, Indigenous food sovereignty provides a restorative framework for health and community development and appreciates the ways in which we can work together cross-culturally to heal our relationships with one another and the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food."

There are four primary principles that guide Indigenous communities who are striving to achieve Indigenous food sovereignty. These being: Sacred or Divine Sovereignty, Participation, Self Determination and Legislation and Policy. Sacred or divine sovereignty is the concept that food is a gift from the Creator and as such it is sacred and cannot be constrained by colonial laws. Food sovereignty is achieved in this regard by "upholding our long standing sacred responsibilities to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food" (Morrison, 2011). Participation essentially means that we are actively participating in the practice of nurturing healthy relationships with the land, plant and animals which sustain us. Continuing to participate in Indigenous food related activities at the individual, familial and community level is essential to maintaining Indigenous food sovereignty for everyone now and for the future generations as well. Self-determination in Indigenous food sovereignty means "the freedom and ability to respond to our needs for healthy culturally adapted Indigenous foods. It represents the freedom and ability to make decisions over the amount and quality of food we hunt, fish, gather, grow and eat. Indigenous food sovereignty promotes freedom from dependence on grocery stores or corporately controlled food production, consumption and distribution in the industrialized food system" (Morrison, 2011). Lastly, Indigenous food sovereignty is "the process of bringing together Indigenous food and cultural values with colonial laws, mainstream policies and economic activities. Indigenous food sovereignty provides a restorative framework approach to policy reform in forestry, fisheries,

environmental conservation, health, and agriculture as well as rural and community development.” (Morrison, 2011)

From a food sovereignty perspective, many people hunt up north. When I was growing up, I had family and lots of friends who went goose hunting in the spring and moose hunting in the fall. In fact, we used to have two weeks off of school in the fall and two weeks off in the spring to accommodate the schedules of local hunting families. The hunts were always exciting. Everyone looked forward to either going or greeting people coming back. In the spring the children would practice their goose calls and in the fall they would practice moose calling. They took great pride in being the best callers in town.





As you can see from the pictures above, hunting and gathering food was a community event. Freezers would get filled and feasts would happen. You could always feel the excitement in the air just before the hunting began. We would have goose or moose for lunch at school. The people who went to church would hold luncheons with wild meat, if you didn't hunt, your neighbors and family did, and they would bring meat for you. Harvesting and hunting times were always the happiest times in our community. Those and hockey tournaments!

As a family we went through rough times off and on. We wouldn't always have money. I remember not eating produce or drinking milk because I didn't want my little sister to go without. We were eleven years apart in age. When I was in high school, I recall picking my little sister up from daycare and there would be no food in the house. It was my job to feed her dinner most of the time, and it seemed like there was never anything to feed her. This particular period lasted roughly for four years. I was lucky that I had a boyfriend as he had a bar and hotel. I used to take my sister there and I would work my shift and feed her. She would hang around with all the grandkids and nieces and nephews. My sister told me that she regarded going to the hotel as a positive experience in her life. She ate and played. There was always food and fun to be had.

As a mother, there have been a few times where I have struggled to make ends meet. My oldest son can tell you that he remembers times when money was tight. My kids never went hungry. I always fed them, I would buy and cook in bulk. At times I was a shift worker, I would cook double batches of chili, stew, meatloaf, shepherd's pie, spaghetti sauces, you name it. I did all of this extra cooking on the weekends so that my kids would have healthy meals to thaw and heat up if I was working late (I usually was). When I got laid off from a job where I was well paid, we suffered. I was living paycheck to paycheck. With no pay, we felt the effects almost immediately. When the freezer started to empty, I worried and was really stressed. I had a job interview at a center that was out into the bush which was quite a long distance from my home. When I was driving home, I saw geese. I got out of my truck, I quietly approached them and I grabbed a goose and snapped its neck. At that time, I didn't have any guns in my house, but I knew I could kill it cleanly, so I did. I would not have known to do that if it weren't for the

Kookums I knew as a child who taught me how to pluck and prepare geese. One told me a story about trying to pluck a goose she thought was dead, but it wasn't. She explained that she had to break its neck and she taught me how to do it. They shared a lot of information with me about harvesting geese, so doing it felt natural, I suppose. The way I saw it, I was doing what I had to do to feed my children.



Nowadays, my biggest issue with food is taking the time to plan dinners. We don't buy fast food very often or rely on restaurants, but sometimes we eat late. On nights like that my youngest son is usually snacking before dinner, and not always on healthy foods. My husband and I cook everything though. My kids can all tell you that we always make dinner, whether or not all of the kids attend, is another issue altogether. We have Sunday night dinners at our home where everyone in the family is expected to be here. My husband and I have five kids between the two of us, we feed everyone. It gives us a chance to catch up, tell stories and laugh. Food and family definitely go together in my home. My home is also a gathering place for people of all ages. From my kids' friends and my friends, to my family and extended family on the holidays, everyone loves to come to my home because we cook meals from scratch and we have the biggest house. Everyone eats well in my home.



Today, financially, my husband and I do well enough to provide all the healthy food our kids need. We have no shortage of good food to eat. We are looking for bush property though as it has been my desire to move out to the country. I have been dreaming about building a sustainable house using renewable energy sources. I would really love to build a garden and grow fruit trees. I would also like to have chickens. Basically, if commercial services like electricity or natural gas heating stopped or the food and water system failed, I would still be able to grow my own food and hunt for the rest. I would still be able to heat my home and have access to clean and safe drinking water.

I believe that my vision for sustainability is based on what I learned growing up as a Cree woman. As a people, I am glad, that many Cree still harvest from the land. Today there are many people who know how to trap, track and hunt. There are also people who know how to butcher and prepare the meat. Many of us need to learn from others. Our youth need the opportunity to learn, not just to feed themselves and others, but to ensure the continuation of our people and culture. Many Crees will say that the key to a long life is harvesting from the land. Many of our people are sick with diabetes, heart problems and cholesterol problems and it's well understood that most of the sickness in our communities is a direct result of colonization. Moreover, we understand the impact "modern" and fast foods have on our physical bodies has made us sick. Unhealthy foods such as sugar, salt and alcohol has had a devastating effect on the health of our communities. There are many people who live with a rate of food insecurity for many reasons, poverty, lack of context in hunting and gathering practices, and lack of knowledge in food preparation and cooking. This needs to change.

In conclusion, food security and food sovereignty for me and my family means starting a garden and buying meat from sustainable farming. It also means balancing our diet between meat and produce that are not high in sugars, salts, fats and also devoid of chemical toxins from contaminants. I have provided food security for my children by teaching them how to prepare

food and cook for themselves. I have lived in urban communities for the past 14 years. I would love to take my kids out on the land and teach them how to hunt. In the future, I will find people who have knowledge about hunting and trapping and learn from them. Food security and food sovereignty is about sustainable foods, safe and drinkable water, health and wellbeing. If we have little or no access to healthy food, our health and culture suffers in many ways. Food security and food sovereignty tools enables us to be well in all realms of our humanness; physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. As a fourth year Indigenous social work student, I aim to use my knowledge of food security and food sovereignty to help my clients on an individual, family and community level. Chi-miigwetch.

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Working with Non-Indigenous Colleagues: Coping Mechanisms for Māori Social Workers

Awhina Hollis-English

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Introduction

Examining the challenges and contemporary issues experienced by indigenous social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand reveals a consistent response: ‘working with non-indigenous colleagues is challenging’. Māori, the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand have well established theories and models that are grounded in traditional knowledge and cultural practices. Māori have been employed in a range of social work roles for more than three decades. Many Māori are managers in various social service and health agencies, supervisors and involved in policy making, which ultimately affects outcomes for Māori families. However, a challenge is the way indigenous Māori and non- Māori social workers interact and relate on a daily basis.

Research was undertaken in 2009 with 30 Māori social workers from throughout New Zealand who participated in qualitative interviews and hui (focus groups). Kaupapa Māori research techniques were utilized by a Māori researcher, who gathered, interpreted and presented the research findings. This article presents both the stories of Māori social workers, their challenges and experiences as well as suggesting ‘coping mechanisms’ when dealing with miscommunication and cultural misunderstandings. The quotations are the voices of the social workers who contributed their experiences to the 2009 study. Where they use Māori concepts and language to explain their views, translations are added in brackets.

Coping Mechanisms

Coping mechanisms relate to the ways in which Māori social workers deal with the difficulties that arise when working with non-Māori colleagues. These ‘issues’ for Māori social workers are not the same for everyone in any social service organization. Neither are the coping mechanisms the same, save for there being a recurring theme that non-Māori colleagues are the source of many of the difficulties faced by Māori social workers within their social work practice. In some situations, it is the lack of support from non-Māori colleagues, and in others it is a blatant challenge to Māori processes. Some of the issues revolve around a lack of education

and others are an issue with the organizational rules regarding initial assessments. Nonetheless, Māori social workers are forced to find ways of coping with the clashes that occur in the work environment that result from different worldviews and the dominance of Pākehā (non-Māori) culture in virtually all New Zealand institutions.

Māori in the social services

Prior to the 1980s, social services in New Zealand were staffed by non-Māori social workers, managers, administrators and a monocultural ethnocentric ideology was the norm. In the late 1980s the Minister of Social Welfare commissioned a report into the effectiveness of the Department of Social Welfare, particularly in responding to Māori clients. Following this report which highlighted a plethora of shortcomings, more Māori began to be employed by the Department of Social Welfare. Some of those people have now had more than two decades of experience in social service organizations. However, when they arrived, they had to put their stake in the ground and stand up for Māori ways of being.

I came in here with my eyes wide open and I knew that if I was going to get somewhere I was going to have to work my butt off and I was quite young, vibrant and stropky. I came in and said, this is the way I work and nobody will change that. And it was said “She came in and she works very differently to us”... and now that is their problem. So I spoke at the meeting and said “that is why you employed me and I’m not changing” If I go to see a whānau (*extended family*) and they have no food or furniture I am not going to talk about parenting, I am going to go and get some food and get some furniture.

These people were a new presence in many ways in Government organizations. In the early days it was not an easy transition for social workers, Māori and non- Māori staff needed to adjust to changings ways of doing things and working with colleagues with little understanding of each other’s cultural norms. Māori social workers unashamedly used Māori practices and then challenged colleagues to be accepting of this different approach. A lack of support from non-Māori colleagues was at times a result of people never having worked with Māori as social workers. These people frequently had no knowledge of Māori customs and concepts. In some cases, non- Māori colleagues were unwilling to adjust to the attempts at introducing biculturalism into the social services. Some non- Māori social workers left, others made their unease and unwillingness to support Māori methods known.

Another situation arises when colleagues approach Māori social workers regarding not wanting to work with Māori families. In some cases, where a social worker has little understanding of the cultural needs on their Māori clients and they have a negative experience with a Māori client/family, this can bring about a situation where a non- Māori worker decides they will only work with people who are non- Māori. Opting out of working with Māori families

should not be an option. It would be more helpful for organizations to provide training for staff who lack the skills to work cross-culturally.

Promoting anti-discriminatory practice

Māori social workers not only feel challenged by their colleagues, but they also challenge them to adopt anti-discriminatory practice. There is a clear message that supporting the use of Māori methods within organizations is not just up to Māori to promote, non- Māori social workers also need to actively support Māori practices so that people in positions of power; managers and decision-making can also be supportive of Māori methods. This is fundamental to creating an anti-discriminatory workplace and will ultimately benefit Māori families. Māori social workers have an expectation that all social workers will have gained the knowledge and skills to work in anti-racist and anti-discriminatory ways.

Another Māori social worker raised the issue of further education for social work staff because of the challenges she faced as a Māori social worker.

Improvements that could be made... More social workers that are Māori, which is problematic as there just isn't the numbers down here. Also, having more education for staff and other social workers within the organization, so that social workers that are Māori are not so isolated and continually challenged.

This highlights a further issue: that of isolation of Māori social workers as there are too few to make up a critical mass in most organizations. This results in a feeling of isolation. However, when all social workers practice in a non-discriminatory manner, the feeling of isolation would be addressed.

Varying levels of support

There are Māori social workers in the health sector who are employed primarily to work with Māori families. Even though they may experience challenges to their processes, where there is sufficient support for a Māori team, it makes a difference.

I suppose I feel quite supported within Māori health, I don't know, I don't really work with tauiwī, (*non-* Māori) so I don't know how they perceive us at all. I know there is one lady out there...she wants to know why I have to be out there solely visiting Māori when I could be in mainstream visiting everybody. But I know I am supported.

This comment signifies that there is a lack of understanding that there is value in Māori workers dealing with Māori clients. Māori staff have an additional qualification: being Māori is an attribute that is brought to engagement with Māori clients.

Māori social worker experience a variety of levels of support from colleagues. While some colleagues may perceive their motives as being supportive, Māori social workers note being questioned ‘why do we have to do this?’ some colleagues sighing or dismissing Māori practices, being unsupportive (not actively supporting Māori practices) in many cases is much the same as being negative about it. They believe there is a real need for ongoing anti-racist education and supervision that challenges the assumptions and beliefs of social workers in New Zealand who must work in various cross-cultural contexts. Māori social workers must have the capacity to work in bi-cultural contexts by being bi-cultural with increasing migration they will increasingly work in cross-cultural contexts. Non- Māori colleagues have much to gain from working alongside Māori colleagues in a supportive and open way so that there is on-going opportunity for learning from one another.

From social worker to educator

One of the most common coping mechanisms is educating colleagues about Te Ao Māori (*the Māori world*). Some Māori social workers have taken on the role of the educator of peers while others recommend that the organization or the training institutes take on a stronger role. The depth of training about Māori customs from social work training institutes and organizations continues to be questioned.

One thing that could be improved about working here is staff morale and education. Everyone needs to be trained on Māoritanga (*Māori culture*) so that they can get used to it and there would be a lot more understanding in the workplace. Then they wouldn’t look at us as if we are in a different system. Some of the staff do know more but there are some who haven’t caught up.

Māori social workers often arrive in new roles within teams where they are the only Māori staff member. The cultural environment of the team has been established as being of the dominant culture and Māori often have to adapt to it and then once established and accepted as Māori, slowly include Māori practices within the team.

Māori social workers have much work to do in teams when they arrive. Not only do they have to learn about the team culture, but they also have to help the team to understand difference and not be afraid of it. They have to become educators. They need to be strategic about where to put their efforts. Management and training institutes should be more aware of their responsibilities to educate all social workers about cultural difference and in New Zealand it needs to begin with learning about Māori. It is not uncommon in New Zealand for Māori students to be asked to inform a class about Māori ways of being and in the workplace for the Māori staff to be asked to educate their colleagues. Every Māori is expected to be an expert educator of Māori customs while there is not an equivalent expectation that non- Māori staff are experts about Pākehā (non- Māori) culture.

I think sometimes our people get put in the role of teacher, when that's not what we asked to do, we're social workers. We get drawn into teaching our colleagues and then who is there with our Māori families?

There can be rewards for Māori staff who have a gift of being an educator. Where they educate a team about a Māori worldview the work environment can become supportive of Māori practices. This may however have limitations when a deeper understanding of Māori belief systems, such as *wairuatanga* (*spirituality*), is not understood within an organization. There is a view that a lack of education can result in either ignorance or a complete lack of interest. In either case this impacts on the delivery of service to Māori families and adds additional strain to Māori workers who feel doubly responsible to Māori clients. Even when Pākehā colleagues show interest in learning about Māori worldviews and working more effectively with Māori clients, the Māori colleague is placed in the position of being the educator inevitably placing additional work on their desk. There is a double edged sword in showing a willingness to educate colleagues: additional stress and moving to a role that can create more work and tension.

For those less willing to become the office educator, there can be a move towards focusing entirely on the client's needs and minimizing contact with colleagues. This can be isolating for Māori workers and may make for a less satisfying workplace. There are however many non-Māori colleagues who are a joy to work with. They are well-educated, focusing on the needs of clients, bi-cultural practitioners, supportive of Māori colleagues with a deep awareness of the inequalities in society. They are advocates for Māori staff and allies in the workplace, challenging their colleagues, management and services to be bi-cultural.

Māori in the assessment process

Gaining access to Māori families during initial assessments as one of the most important stages for *whakawhanaungatanga*, the process of getting to know the families and finding out what their expectations of the service are. Moreover, it is an important stage for those working within the medical model, in order to prevent incorrect diagnoses or referrals. It is imperative that the Māori team member is included at the beginning to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding, particularly where a clinician does not have an in-depth understanding of Māori cultural practices and beliefs.

A lot of our clinicians don't get it so they'll ask the family first. And the family feel *whakamā* (*shy*) and say "oh, whatever". For me it's about trying to get their heads around the importance of *wanaungatanga* (*kinship relationships*). If you know the family is Māori just try and see if you can get me to sit in on the assessment. You don't just ask them. That connection gets lost. If you can get a 'brown face' into that assessment then we can make that connection. If further down the track they don't want Māori involvement, that's fine. But it's trying to get the clinicians to understand the importance of having Māori at the initial assessment.

Māori often refer to themselves as ‘a brown face’. This is a term of endearment to one another used with amusement and humour by Māori. It emphasizes a Māori belief that having someone of the same culture in the room is an advantage in a team that is working with a Māori client. It is commonly understood that one does not need brown skin in order to be Māori, however it is a general term used to describe anyone of Māori descent who uses Māori customs and protocols. Māori workers provide a link for Māori clients. They can read body language, advocate for clients and assist colleagues: they play a multiple role when Māori clients arrive in a new context.

The Pākehā system does not always work for our Māori families. I noticed, when you are doing the triage, a lot of our Māori families are slipping through the system in the assessments. We give them a lot of phone calls and they aren’t returning them so the file is closed. Then the family is presented again with more health issues.

Māori workers also recommend that they are routinely included in initial meetings so that the family is not placed in a position of having to work out office politics and why particular people are included in meetings.

We have the same problem when we have a referral; we have the basic questions, ‘what is your ethnicity?’ You get a Māori family that come in, then you get clinicians that ask the family “would you like a Māori support worker and kaumātua (*elders*)?” this does not always work, we don’t always get to meet the family. My argument is if we can sit on the first assessment then that is the best thing. But the clinicians say we should just ask them, but no, it’s not that simple.

There are Māori workers who take a stance of always wanting to meet Māori clients and families so that they can use their own knowledge and networks to ensure that clients have the best information available to them. They acknowledge this can create an overload in their casework but want the option of managing this to the best of their ability. Where the team respects the view that Māori staff have an important contribution to make at the initial assessment it can become standard practice to consult them and ensure they are present. However, in other settings there may be colleagues who see Māori as one of a number of ethnic groups and they cannot see why Māori staff should be making this an issue as it is not available to others.

There are workplaces that have a social worker who is willing to advance the view that Māori staff must be present at the initial assessments for all Māori clients. This requires confidence, commitment and strength.

I am constantly challenging my boss, making suggestions, bringing things to meetings and backing it up with evidence, research, and all the rest. And it took a while but now everyone

knows to bring in cultural support as a given so the family doesn't need to make that call, it's there already for them. Not just Māori, PI (Pacific Island), Middle Eastern, Asian.

There is evidence now that Māori social workers are actively promoting cultural recognition in the workplace. New Zealand is becoming increasingly multi-cultural and all clients should be seen within their own cultural contexts,

It was never like this before, I was always approaching the old manager and pushing for it. But then we got a Māori manager and now there are no worries. Things like meeting with Māori families, yeah, when you're not the worker, just to see if they need cultural support, having a hui, it's all supported now.

Another Māori social worker described how her experiences have influenced her as a social worker and how she has gained skills from some of the difficulties with the western organizational systems.

I guess one of the positive things that working for the DHB (District Health Board) has taught me is around resilience and things that I'm not prepared to give up. It has shown me what I'm not prepared to give out to Pākehā or to the system. Here, I am making some strong decisions around where I want to go and what I want to do.

Therefore, some of the difficulties have given her the opportunity for growth and self-evaluation. Although the situations have been different for all the Māori social workers, nonetheless there are still a variety of coping mechanisms and personal issues that are faced by Māori social workers.

Brown-face burnout

'Brown-face burnout' has two important components; first it is about Māori social workers being overworked and generally unhappy about their workload. The second and most important point is that this 'burnout' is associated with their ethnicity; being Māori. It is evident from the research findings that organizations have differing approaches to the implementation of bicultural practices. While there are many ways to approach this issue, it is evident that suggestions on bicultural procedure for organizations would enable Māori social workers to avoid burning-out because of their culture. The following discussion includes 'procedural equality' and 'substantive equality' to analyze the implementation of bicultural practices in organizations. Within this section are the issues of being 'cultural experts' and the extent to which Māori social workers accept additional tasks in order to implement tikanga in the workplace.

Theoretical Interpretations

Smith and Lusthaus (1995) describe equality within the workplace as being implemented either procedurally or substantially using the terms 'fair play' for procedural equality and 'fair shares' for substantial equality. 'Fair play' describes the way procedures are adapted to ensure they are promoting equal opportunities to services for all cultural groups. In this context this would involve an organization making itself 'open' to all/any cultural group, including Māori clients, whānau and communities through adapting its procedures to suit their needs. Gibson, cited in Smith and Lusthaus (1995, p. 380), states that 'fair play' can be implemented superficially or generously "Stingily applied, the fair play ... model represents a stern and unsympathetic form of rugged individualism. Generously applied, it can accommodate a considerable measure of humanitarianism" (Gibson, 1990, p. 63). It is evident that the extent to which procedural equality or 'fair play' has been implemented in relation to Māori whānau differs substantially depending on the organization. In order to implement procedural equality in relation to Māori whānau, an organization would need to do a number of things; present itself in a way that would indicate to Māori whānau that they will be accepted, supported and respected by the organization, while implementing tikanga processes throughout the interaction with whānau.

They are more open and there are a number of things for Māori health like developing the tikanga and recommended best practices.

Using this theoretical approach, this would indicate that some organizations that sparingly apply 'fair play' in relation to Māori whānau are also not implementing the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi within their organization. While those organizations that implement the principles of the Treaty through tikanga Māori are more substantively applying 'fair shares'. 'Fair shares' or substantial equality is described by Smith and Lusthaus (1995, p. 380) "as a more expansive form of equality which promotes the collective welfare of all members of the community, regardless of their ability to compete in 'life's race.'" This approach indicates that equality has been addressed in a substantial manner when the organization focuses on 'equal outcomes' of their services, ensuring that the welfare of the client, whānau or community has been enhanced. Smith and Lusthaus argue that if only procedural equality is implemented without substantial equality then "disadvantaged individuals will still finish last, if they finish the race at all" (1995, p. 380).

Being cultural experts

One of the ways organizations attempted to implement procedural and substantive equality was through the employment of Māori social workers. However, one of the reasons for Māori social workers being 'burnt-out' was because they were viewed as 'cultural experts' by their non-Māori colleagues and sometimes managers. Māori social workers reported that it was a

common occurrence for their organization to make assumptions about their knowledge, skills and values around tikanga Māori. As a result of this research, the following discussion includes some of the ways that tikanga has been implemented within organizations, alongside ways that the processes could be improved:

- *Saying a karakia (prayer) – Implementation of spirituality*

While many social service organizations acknowledged the importance of karakia (*prayers*) as a part of Māori customs (as well as some non-Māori), there are a number of issues with its implementation. The karakia is often used as a way to begin meetings, gatherings, before eating and also as a part of the farewell process of a get-together. The following points are suggestions for organisations to use the karakia:

- First of all, is it a 'karakia' that is appropriate or a non-Māori 'prayer'? Who decides?
- If a karakia is deemed appropriate, what type? Should it be formal, traditional, addressing Ranginui (*sky father*) and Papatūānuku (*earth mother*)? Acknowledging the landmarks of the tribal groups represented at the gathering, or should the speaker use a prayer from a particular religious group, e.g. Christian, Rātana or Ringatū faiths?
- Is it more appropriate for the spokes-person to be Māori or non-Māori, a manager or worker, or perhaps an elder?

It is important to note that there is no 'one correct procedure' that suits every organization, but that the organization needs to have a set of kawa (*protocols*), that reflects the local tribal groups' understanding of karakia. When people are about to eat they may decide that a karakia spoken informally by anyone in English or Māori is appropriate, however if the organization is welcoming a visiting group the most appropriate person to undertake the karakia may be an elder, cultural advisor or the manager of the organization.

- *Welcoming groups to the organisation*

The questions an organization needs to ask itself when they are welcoming a group are quite similar to those involved with a karakia. The implementation of Māori customs is often 'tokenistic' when welcoming people to their organization. Tokenism in this context is evident when an organization may hold a pōwhiri (*formal Māori welcome*), which is the most formal welcoming process, for some visitors and not others. The organization might attempt to implement only certain aspects of a pōwhiri (those that are 'easier' or cost less financially) such as having a cup of tea rather than a hākari (*shared food*).

It is important for organizations to develop a welcoming policy so that staff members clearly know what is expected of them. The kawa (*processes*) around the welcome then becomes

a normal part of the organization. In order to develop the policy the organization needs to ask themselves:

- When is a pōwhiri appropriate to use within this organisation? Alternately a ‘mihi whakatau’ (*speech of greeting*) or a karakia (*prayer*) may be more appropriate. Who decides?
- What roles are needed for a pōwhiri, who has the capabilities to undertake these roles? Consider whether they are Māori or non-Māori, a manager or worker, or an elder?
- Who ensures that customs are implemented appropriately?

In order for the organization to address these issues they need to consult widely so that their customs reflect that of the local tribal groups. They also need to ensure that their policies are appropriate for the knowledge, skills and values of the workers they employ and if they do not, then additional training may be required.

Education within the workplace

Within many organizations Māori social workers are treated as ‘cultural experts’ by being asked to answer these questions. Māori social workers are often asked to educate their colleagues and managers both formally: being asked to run workshops for colleagues, or informally: being asked to answer questions about Te Ao Māori (*a Māori worldview*) or tikanga (*customs*). However, Māori social workers are not necessarily cultural experts, they do not gain this form of cultural expertise when they complete their social work training, nor are they necessarily born with it. Nonetheless, many Māori social workers develop the knowledge that is needed because of the nature of the workplace. In order for organizations to educate their employees around Māori customs and ‘the Māori world’ they need to ask themselves:

- What is it about the Māori world that management and social workers need to know within this particular organisation? Are there different levels of knowledge, skills and values? Are different types of training needed for management, social workers, Māori and/or non-Māori?
- Who is the most appropriate person to do this training? Should it be a local elders, cultural advisor or an educational institution?
- In an informal capacity, how much does the organisation rely on the skills, knowledge and values of individual Māori social workers?

These questions that were derived out of the research findings could be useful for organizations to begin to address these issues themselves and with their communities.

What are the complications?

I am really sorry I haven't got a brown face, but I am the Māori social worker, can I help you?

Complications arise when assumptions are made about the authenticity of Māori social workers. The above quote indicates the type of issues that can arise when colleagues have expectations about what a Māori social worker should look like, as well as act like. McKinley (2005 p. 448) describes the impact of colonial worldviews on the way Māori are both perceived and also understand their own identities:

The legacy of the 19th century discourse of “blood” could be traced.... when many of the Māori women scientists described themselves in terms of the amount of “Māori blood” they had and connected this to both their “skin colour” and their authenticity as Māori.... The desire to transform one’s visibility comes with ambivalence for many of the women. The women almost apologize for being “inauthentically” Māori, as there is some pressure today to no longer “pass.”(McKinley, 2005 p. 448).

McKinley follows on to describe how having ‘Māori blood’ was seen to be ‘polluting’ to ‘white blood’ and that along with this view there was the notion that ‘Māori blood’ resulted in people being less reliable and more prone to drunken behaviour than others with ‘white blood’. She states: “Through her fair skin and her withholding of conversation on the ancestry marker she reinforces the hegemonic assumption that she is ‘white’” (McKinley, 2005 p. 448; Te Rito, 2005). Much like in McKinley’s research, this research finds that assumptions are still being made about the authenticity of Māori and generalization are being made about what their skin colour implies. In the quote at the top of this section, the Māori social worker is being questioned by a colleague as to whether or not she is Māori, because she has ‘fair skin’. The assumption here is that she cannot be authentically Māori because of her skin colour and perhaps has less knowledge, skills and values than a darker-skinned social worker. However, this is not the case. Organizations need to think critically about the role of Māori social workers and to be clear about them, not only in terms of creating policies but also about how they view ‘difference’ with respect and understanding. In Māori circles, having a ‘brown-face’ is more than just looking Māori, it is about identifying as Māori and living by those values and belief systems. The key message here, is not to assume or to expect a certain level of ‘Māoriness’ based of physical characteristics, but to understand the knowledge, skills and values of each Māori social worker, and what unique characteristics and value they add to the organizational setting.

Conclusions

Māori social workers now have more than three decades of experiences in the social services. They have planted their roots in the profession and used it as a tool to work with and

build up their people. This article presents the relationships between Māori and non- Māori in its rawest way, showing, from a Māori perspective, where the misunderstandings can create tensions and workplace issues. However, many coping-mechanisms and positive messages have come out of the process of hearing an indigenous viewpoint, particularly in a contemporary setting where it is easy to assume that cultural relations have improved. In fact, this research found that, yes, cultural relationships have improved within social service organizations since the 1980s, however there are still many challenges and building and maintaining cultural understandings – cultural competencies – is still highly important for all social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand and more importantly for the families and communities within which they practice.

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Four Stories of an Over-Taxed Indian

Celeste Pedri-Spade, PhD.

Abstract

Based on personal, excavated memories, this autoethnographic narrative represents, in four storied vignettes, an evocative, intimate account of the author's lived experience as a Status First Nation Indian shopper who chooses to exercise her rights with respect to certain tax exemptions on goods purchased. Through various interactions mediated by her Indian Status Card, the author reveals both inner and outer conflict as she engages in critical self-reflection of her 'Indianness', and how others accept and negotiate her identity and rights. The author's hope in sharing her stories is to foster critical thought and dialogue around issues stemming from Canada's Indian Act with respect to the inventorying of Status First Nation individuals, public misconceptions and reactions to tax exemption provisions embedded in Treaty Rights, and the treatment of Status Indian shoppers.

Keywords: indigenous autoethnography, Canadian First Nations, Indian Act

"The only thing we can write about with authority is ourselves" (Absolon and Willett, 2005, p. 97).

Prologue

My spirit name is *Anag Oniimiiwin* (Star Dancer). My given name is Celeste. I am an *Anishinabekwe* (Ojibwe woman) from northern Ontario and a Band Member of Lac Des Mille Lacs First Nation. My clan is the bear. As a self-identifying Indigenous researcher, I embrace the advice of Cree scholar Onowa McIvor (2010) on how to begin this text. That is, I must first situate myself in this research by answering the following questions: *What brings me here? What do I have to contribute to my people/community/nation? From where do I speak?*

I am here to share stories about my life as an Anishinabekwe. And there are a few significant points I need to highlight about how I think about stories before I do so. First, my stories are a part of me. I embody the experiences and teachings that come to me through my own creativity and personal reflection and through stories gifted to me by my relatives, friends, and community members. Second, every time I share these stories, it is my hope that they will bring forth new interpretations and new knowledge to the listener/reader, and I encourage all those who are marked by my stories to engage in personal reflection, to add their story, and to speak about this to their friends and family members— because this is how we keep our stories alive. This how we keep ourselves alive. Lastly, I self-identity as a 'storysharer' and not a teller of stories. I am a storysharer because even as I write or I speak in the oral tradition, my words reflect the knowledge and teachings that I have always shared with every being and everything,

every place, every spirit. To “tell” a story is to inform, to instruct, to convey, but to “share” a story is to care, to gift, to love, to honour the sum of our relationships, which is to honour the gift that we are always connected.

As an Anishinabekwe I contribute to a long legacy of sharing stories as a legitimate form of knowledge practice and it is important to recognize that Indigenous people have and continue to employ their own ways of knowing and transmitting knowledge, which are often grounded in ceremony, artistic practices, community and family, and land-based activities. The sharing of stories is just one of these performative practices. Several Indigenous authors (see Cole, 2006; Comtassel, 2009; Qwul’sih’yah’maht, 2005; Waziyatawin, 1996) articulate the power of stories within an Indigenous knowledge system. Stories are linked to personal identity, a sense of belongingness, and responsibility to kinship and community. They are told out of respect, love, kindness, perseverance and concern, thus, become part of a kind, gentle, compassionate way of knowing. As Cheney (2002) articulates,

Knowledge is a narrative of a life lived in the world. Individuals may tell their own stories or pass down the stories of others. We grow and learn by sharing and reflecting on stories: Stories are what we know (p. 97).

Indeed, in many Indigenous knowledge systems, stories are knowledge in their own right; they are not simply anecdotes or pieces of “data” that must be manipulated through western theory or analytical devices in order to become knowledge. As an Anishinabekwe, I have come to appreciate the possibilities of sharing stories in research related to issues, which our Anishinabe people deem relevant to our way of life. This point brings me to what my stories are about and what they are intended to do.

I intend to draw from memories of my personal lived experiences in order to explore how various human interactions mediated by my Indian Status Card—a document issued by Canadian government — result in a critical reflection of the meaning and consequences of ‘Indianness’ and the interpretation, negotiation and acceptance of Indian identity and rights. My intent is to foster critical thought and dialogue around issues stemming from Canada’s Indian Act with respect to the inventorying of Indigenous individuals, public misconceptions and reactions to tax exemptions legally entitled to Status Indian shoppers, and the overall treatment of Status Indian shoppers. By sharing my own personal stories, I will reveal “personal problems as public issues, so as to encourage collective identity and collective solutions” (Richardson, 1995, p. 216). I also follow the work of Cole (2006) in that my intent is to challenge the reader to fill in the spaces of my storied words. By filling in spaces I acknowledge and have faith in the reader’s responsibility and ability accept these stories and take them beyond these pages.

In sharing my voice and carving out a space here for my personal narratives as an Indigenous academic, I actively participate in talking back and working against colonization and cognitive imperialism, which has historically silenced Indigenous peoples (Battiste, 2000; Smith, 1999). In western academia the researcher is too often forced to remove the self from the subject,

which is difficult for Indigenous people (McIvor, 2010). As an *Anishinabekwe*, I believe this is an impossible task to achieve—separation of my ‘self’ from my ‘subject’ as I am in constant relationship with all that is. I am a part of, rather than apart from all aspects of reality. As such, I draw from and contribute to an emerging body of qualitative research that explores Indigenous autoethnography as a distinct, legitimate, and respectful means of collecting and producing knowledge that combines the tradition of storytelling with the practice of academic research (see McIvor, 2010; Whitinui, 2010).

Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and interpret personal experience in order to understand cultural experience (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Ellis & Adams et al., 2011; Ellis, 2004). It is qualitative research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural, back and forth through autoethnographers gaze as they focus outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience, and inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations (Bochner and Ellis, 2000). While the attempts to define autoethnography are as diverse as the opinions of what it is and what it is intended to do (Adams, Jones, et al., 2008), I embrace autoethnography as personal narrative: Stories about authors who view themselves as the phenomenon and write evocative narratives specifically focused on their academic, research, and personal lives (see Goodall, 2006; Tillman, 2009). Personal narratives seek to “understand a self or some aspect of a life as it intersects with a cultural context, connect to other participants as co-researchers, and invite readers to enter the author's world and to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives” (Ellis, 2004, p.46). My stories, presented as four short tales also incorporate the use of poetry as an attempt to increase the evocative nature of this type of work and to magnify the authenticity of my lived experiences (see Richardson, 1997; Vannini & Gladue, 2009).

Interlude

Before I share my stories, it is important to provide some context with respect to Canada’s Indian Act, the Certificate of Indian Status (Status Card) and certain tax exemption provisions for Indian Status shoppers on goods they purchase for use on Indian reservations in Canada.

Canada’s Indian Act is the principal statute through which the Canadian government administers Indian Status, First Nations governments and the management of reservation lands and monies. It was introduced in 1876, as a culmination of a series of colonial decrees established to eradicate Indigenous ways of life and assimilate all Indigenous Peoples into Euro-Canadian society. Among other things, this Act determined who in Canada was eligible for “Indian status” as a legal recognition of a person’s Indian ancestry and heritage, resulting in certain rights. One of these rights affords certain tax exemption provisions on goods purchased by Status Indians. Specifically, Status Indians can buy goods off of an Indian reservation in

Canada without paying the General Sales Tax (federal tax) providing they will be using said goods on an Indian reservation in Canada. Those wishing to exercise this legal right must present the Certificate of Indian Status Card (see Figure 1) at the point of sale.

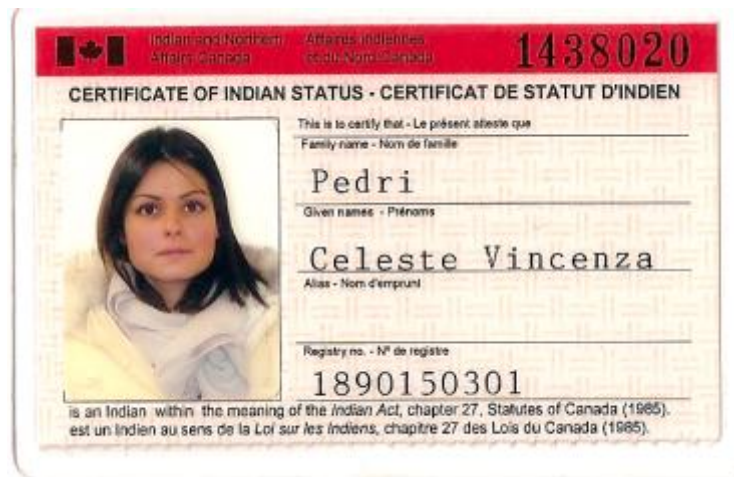


Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1: Certificate of Indian Status for Celeste Pedri

It is important to note that “Indian Status” is an imposed colonial system, which empowers the federal government with sole discretion in determining who qualifies as an Indian person in Canada. It is a system based on blood quantum and has nothing to do with, let’s say, a Cree/Anishinabe/Coast Salish person’s real connection to, or membership within, their respective Indigenous community. Thus, Indian Status is criticized as a system that enables Canada to deny and bypass Indigenous sovereignty by replacing the many Indigenous Nations in Canada with a made-up category of “Indian” (Lawrence, 2011). Yet, having Indian Status continuously shapes the lived realities of Indigenous Peoples in Canada in ways that affect their personal and collective identities, sense of belongingness, connection/disconnection to their ancestral lands, and cross-cultural relations. Indian Status is both an objective and subjective aspect of Indigenous experience in Canada. In other words, Indian Status is complicated.

Tale One: Plastics Welcome!

“This is mental mom. Would you please remind me whose idea it was to come to Wally world today?” I’m clearly not impressed as I maneuver my way through the cosmetic aisle on a Friday afternoon. I can hear the *clack clack clack* of a fast approaching cart behind me. I steer our cart sharply to the right. Everyone knows that road rules apply in Walmart aisles.

This is insane.

“Mom, please tell me we can leave soon. Are you ready to check out yet?”

“Just a few last things,” my mother says, holding up two bottles of nail polish. “Which colour do you like best?”

“Mooomm... they’re both pink! But you know you are asking the wrong person.”

“I don’t think I have this colour yet,” she says oblivious to my response or my irritation. “I’ll get this one. Okay, now I’m good. Let’s head to the check-out.”

Finally.

We make it to at cash-out 8. There’s no space for our stuff on the conveyer thing, so we both grab some glossy mags and engross ourselves in the latest Angie and Brad scandal. As the line moves forward we eventually begin to unload our cart. Suddenly, I notice a grayish sticker peeling away from the metal post with the checkout light:



Figure 2: Sticker at Point of Sale

“Hey mom, look at that. They welcome status cards here. Well, isn’t that something new. Weird. Why would Walmart welcome Indian status cards? You think it would be the opposite when our cards mean they have to fill-out more paperwork?” I wonder if maybe this is a new tactic, big ole’ gazillionaire Mr. Walmart trying to suck up to the Nish¹ shopper, in which case, I would understand given that I’d say half the people around me right now are most likely packing an Indian status card. I read it again. “Status Cards Welcome.”

Well when were they ever not welcome?

Why do they need a welcoming?

My status card, now before me as a welcome mat.

This is something new. What is this telling me? That it’s okay to be an Indian here? But, where and when is it not okay to be an Indian? When is our status not welcome? I wonder, from a store

¹ Anishinabe

operations management perspective, if it is more advantageous for me to be status during the store's peak hours...or maybe when it's not so busy. Hmmm...

"Mom, do you think that sticker singles us out?"

"Well, no more than the card does I guess," she says laughing. "Come on and help me with this case of pop. I can't reach it from this side." I look again and notice that above the status card welcome sticker is a "Visa Accepted Here" sticker (see Figure 2). Wait a minute; I'm both a visa carrier and a status card carrier. Does this make me extra welcome? Yeah, I've got plastic, two-types of plastic in-fact.

I purchase in plastic and I exist as an Indian in plastic.

We reach the counter and start to unload all of our items. My mom pulls her status card from her purse and hands it over to the cashier before she starts ringing our items through.

"So, when did you get these stickers here?" I ask the cashier, pointing to the sticker.

"What stickers?" She asks leaning forward to see what I'm pointing to. "Oh, *those* stickers. Um, I think a couple of months ago. I don't know much about it. I think it was done as a partnership between some First Nation political organization and us...to make First Nation people feel more welcome here and show that we don't discriminate against them."

THEM

I cringe

Herded into some club

I never volunteered to be part of

Presenting my card

Admission for one please

The doors shut behind me.

The air is stale, lights dim

But I Don't want to play this game

The odds are not in my favour

They are never in my favour

Pushed towards the nearest table

Dealer shuffles the cards

I reach for the top card

Dealer turns it over

House wins

House always wins

"Oh," I say. "So, I'm curious, what do you think about these stickers? Has anyone commented about them? Do you think it makes people feel more welcome?"

"Um..... actually, no one has really ever said anything about them," she says. "But, personally, I like them because it makes them show their cards to me before I start ringing

through their items. It sucks when they give them to me at the end because that means I have to re-ring all their stuff.”

Them. Them. Them. Them.

Stab.

Jab.

Stab.

Jab.

Them...

Cards.

Them...

Indians.

Split.

The.

Deck.

Flip.

The.

Card.

So selling stuff to an Indian is different than selling stuff to a non-Indian? I want to say this out loud but I don't because, well, she's just the check-out girl. I keep this question to myself and wonder how many other Indians have thought about this. The girl rings through the rest of our items. My mom hands over her Visa and signs different receipts. A receipt to authorize her credit and receipt to authorize her 'Indianness'.

Tale 2: Buyer's Remorse

I'm not big on shopping but I'm downtown in the big city—here for work—and am just trying to kill some time before I have to catch a cab back to the airport. I pop into a store I'd never heard of before. It's window display looks promising. But a few steps inside, I begin to think this wasn't a great idea. There's a long line up and only one cashier, so even if I did happen to find something I like, would I really want to be in that line? I decide to just take a quick tour around.

I have got to have that! I've been hooked by a fantastic greenish-blue sweater on a mannequin. I check for my size and, of course, like a responsible shopper, I check the price tag. A bit steep, but how often do I do this? I've had a long, busy day. This will be my treat. I grab the sweater and head for the monster line. I figure there is no time for the line at the change room. Better head straight to the cash stand. Eventually it's my turn.

“Hi there! Did you find everything you were looking for?” I’m greeted by a young, perky sales associate. With a megawatt smile, she takes my sweater and asks me if I will be paying by cash or credit.

“Hi, yes I did. Thanks. Here you go.” I fish my credit card out of my purse and hand it over. “Oh, wait, here you go too,” I say as I hand over my Indian status card.

She looks confused

Then

She freezes.

Startled.

She recovers.

Takes my status card.

Drops it on the counter quick.

Her eyes no longer meet mine.

She hesitates.

Panic rises.

She looks around.

Head turns sharp to the right, then back to the left.

She’s looking for someone.

She looks down at the card again and I can hear a faint mumble escape her lips.

“mhhmm, ummm”.

Her breath quickens.

It becomes clear that she doesn’t know how to do a tax-exempt sale. She bends down and begins to fumble, searching for something under the counter. Probably the register manual, or the policy and procedures manual. She’s flustered. She’s scrabbling. What she’s looking for is not where she thought it would be. I’m not who she thought I was.

“I’m the only one here right now. My manager is out,” she squeaks in a barely audible voice as she continues her futile search. She glances up and I can tell she’s slipping into panic mode as she quickly glances over my shoulder at the monstrous line that continues to grow. She looks as if she wants to ask me something, but she doesn’t. She can’t. My card has erected a barrier. She doesn’t look at me when she talks to me. Eventually she finds and brings out a monster manual. She begins to flip through the pages, haphazardly, she’s searching for something yet she doesn’t know what to look for.

Suddenly, I feel bad for being the cause of this young girl’s discomfort and I can’t stand to watch this spectacle anymore. I feel bad because she doesn’t know what to do with me. Being the cause of such anxiety and uneasiness makes me feel sick. Bile in my mouth. I start to sweat. If I hadn’t given her my card, she would be fine, not some crazed and frantic person. I can hear the shallow coughs; grumbles and shuffling of feet behind me grow louder.

Man: I wonder what the hold up is?

Girl: Oh, some chick with a tax card.

Man: Really, you'd think she wouldn't use it when it's so busy.

Girl: Yeah, and it's not like she's even saving tons...not like she's buying a car.

Man: Yeah, totally. You'd think you'd be more selective when using it.

"Oh just forget about it." I blurt out.

She looks up from her binder, "really?"

"Yeah, it's no big deal. Don't worry about it." Instant relief washes over her. She doesn't say anything. She quickly rings me through and hands me my purchase. She slides my card along the counter back towards me. She doesn't pick it up or hand it to me. She doesn't look at me. I pick it up and quickly stuff it in my wallet.

"Your receipt is in the bag. Have a nice day." I head for the door and don't look back. I'm tired and taxed.

Tale 3: Reflections

I'm so excited about this mirror I've found. I'm in a home décor store with my mom and I'm at the register just about to check out. Mom and I are busy yakking away, chatting about the colour scheme for my new place. We're caught up in our own banter. The cashier begins the transaction and provides me with the total. I hand her my credit card along with my status card.

"Oh. You have a tax card. Well, now I have to do this whole sale all over again! You're going to have to wait. You know, you were supposed to give this to me before I started to ring your stuff through. Now, I have to call for another cashier because there are customers waiting behind you." She speaks as if I've done something bad. And I've hugely inconvenienced her and every other possible person in the store.

But I wasn't provided the opportunity to do things right.

I feel like I just shrunk two feet. I'm seven years old again and Ms. Smith is reprimanding me for venturing past the schoolyard fence. And Ms. Smith wouldn't listen to my explanation—that I was just trying to retrieve Erin's ball for her. I was just doing what I thought I should do.

I stare blankly at her, not knowing how to respond. I'm shocked.

Embarrassed.

Disappointed.

Angered.

NOT FAIR.

SNAP.

“Well, where is the sign?” I ask loudly.

“Excuse me?” She replies. I can sense her surprise.

“Well, it’s clear you feel I’ve made a mistake that I shouldn’t have,” I reply. “So, where is the sign that says Indians, please display your status cards prior to purchase?”

She turns away.

A roll of the eyes.

A snicker escapes her lips.

Like a bat against my dignity.

“I’m sorry, what’s so funny?” I look directly at her. My voice is strong. My words are like an arrow and she is my target.

“I think you owe her an answer.” I quickly turn to my right. My mom is fuming. My happy, always lively mom looks as if she is ready to take this woman’s head off.

“Nothing is funny,” replies the cashier.

“Well, why did you laugh?” My mother retorts. I want to disappear. I want to interject. It was okay for me to be hurt and angry, but my mother was just so happy a moment ago and now...I just want to get the hell out of the store. I need to say something. I look at my mother standing stiff, head cocked to the right, chin elevated, tilted slightly to the left. She squints slightly; her lips are pursed, so much that all remains is a thin red line. Both feet are planted firmly on the ground, like a warrior. One hand is gripping the shopping cart, the other is spread wide, palm down on the counter.

I step back.

“I’m not laughing.” The cashier’s voice is clipped.

“Yes, you laughed.” My mom shoots back.

“I didn’t.”

“You did. You did, and nothing about this is funny. Do what you need to do, so we can take our purchase home please.” The cashier has no response. Silence for the remainder of the sale. She bags my mirror.

“Receipt in the bag?” she asks.

“No, I want to hold onto it,” says my mom. “I have a feeling that once we get this mirror home, we may just find that it looks horrible.” She carefully places the receipt in her wallet, picks up the bag, and nods for me to go ahead in front of her.

A mother bear always defends her cubs.

Once out the door, I turn to my mom.

“Do you think we shouldn’t have made such a fuss about that? I guess we really should have given her the Status card beforehand.”

“Celeste, you and I both know that what happened in there had nothing to do with technology or computer systems.”

“It didn’t? I question. “Well maybe she was just having a bad day. Maybe it had nothing to do with us...?”

“Well, we all are entitled to bad days Celeste, but that’s no excuse to single out a person and make them feel bad for something they aren’t responsible for,” she replies.

Something they aren’t responsible for? I wonder if she’s referring to their stupid cash procedures or the fact that we are Indians.

I just don’t want to ask.

Tale three: Don’t forget to Check the Expiry Date!

It’s Friday evening and I’m out with some friends at a local restaurant welcoming the weekend. The place is packed—standing room only. I spot a table of people ready to make their exit, and we race over, scooping three spots.

“Guys, I’ve got a funny story to share,” says my friend John as we peruse the menus. “I was at the store with my gramps the other day and, you know, he was getting ready to pay for his stuff, so he used his Status card. You know how they have all that paperwork you have to fill out with your name, band number, registration number, address...well, I guess he put down his address here in the city instead of back home on the reserve. So, the cashier looks over his scribbles and says, ‘Sir, you have to put down your reserve address here.’”

“Oh really?” I ask, thinking about what I usually write down. “I think I only put down Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation.”

“Yeah well, when she said this to him, my gramps looked up...looked her square in the face...deadpan expression on his face... and said, ‘My reserve, well, little lady, you are standing on it honey. This whole country is my reserve!’”

Everyone bursts out in laughter.

“That’s a good one. Oh, I’ll have to remember that one for next time,” I say. The waitress saunters over and takes our order. I glance over at our friend Shane. His expression is a mixture of confusion and hesitation—he looks a bit like an awkward adolescent, reluctant to ask a question in chemistry class.

“What’s on your mind chum?” I ask.

“Well, let me get this straight,” he responds. “So, if you have one of those cards that says you are an Indian, you don’t have to pay any tax? That’s a pretty sweet deal. Geez, you guys are pretty lucky. Hey Celeste, do you have your card on you now? Can I see it?”

“Sure, I guess,” I respond. As I dig around in my purse, searching for my wallet, I wonder what luck or privilege has to do with being an Indian. Funny way of putting it. I hand my card over to Shane and he examines it front to back.

“Ha! Celeste, did you notice that your card has an expiry date,” says Shane pointing to the back of my card. “Yeah...apparently your status as an Indian in this country expires in two years from now.”

I wonder what the process is for renewing my ‘Indianness’

Indian Agent: Good day Ms. Pedri, so you would like to renew your Indian status today?

Celeste: Yes...ummm....that's correct.

Indian Agent: Please tell me Ms. Pedri, does your government have any reason to question your authenticity as an Indian person, which would then affect your continued status as an Indian?

Celeste: Ummm... I'm not sure I understand...I don't think so... I mean, I think I do a pretty good job at being Indian...errrr...

Indian Agent: Ms. Pedri, before you proceed, I am required to inform you of your right not to renew your status.

Celeste: Really, then what would happen?

Indian Agent: Well, then you would be more like the rest of us here in Canada....ha ha ha (evil laugh)

“Wow, that’s weird Celeste. My card doesn’t have an expiry date,” says John examining his own card. “I guess that means I’m more Indian than you are...well, I AM a little browner. Haha!”

“Ha ha...very funny John,” I retort. “But getting back to what you said about not paying taxes Shane...that is actually a big misconception. Many people mistakenly think that Indigenous people in Canada do not pay income tax, tax on goods purchased or property tax. When really, Indigenous people pay tax on the same basis as others in Canada. There are some limited exceptions provided to Indians on reserve under Section 87 of Canada’s Indian Act. Section 87 exempts status Indians from tax on the goods and services they purchase at businesses located on Indian reserves and on goods bought elsewhere to be used on the reserve.”

“You know Celeste, I read something about this recently in the local paper,” says Shane. “One woman was writing about the racial discrimination she experienced from a cashier while trying to use her status card for tax exemption at a local store in town. This guy responded to her, basically stating that since she benefits from the same services, like health and education, as non-Aboriginal people do, she should pay taxes. He also said that she was pretty much opening up herself to discrimination because...how did he put it?...He said that when one group like Aboriginals, go so far as to define themselves as a separate nation within a nation and seek special status based on race that differences tend to become magnified. He called that a racial theory.”

“But it’s not a special, self-proclaimed right that exempts us from taxes in particular situations,” responds John. “And in my opinion, it actually has nothing to do with the Indian Act. It is a right connected to a longstanding treaty relationship between our people and the Crown. It’s a treaty right, which has existed for over 100 years!”

“Well, from the sounds of it, it’s actually a right connected to legislation...it’s not exactly outlined in the wording of your treaty, is it?” asks Shane.

“It may not be, but I think we are missing a huge point here,” I say. I can feel the heat creep from my hands straight to my cheeks. My heart quickens. “We’ve always been a nation! We’re not seeking any special status. Anishinabe people in this area never surrendered their

nationhood and autonomy to the Crown. So why should we, as Anshinabeg be subject to a colonial Nation's taxation?"

"I wonder what racial theory that guy was referring to?" asks John smiling, obviously getting a rise out of my passionate rant.

"Well, race theory is not simply about explaining how race or racism is organized or operates, but is about readdressing social inequalities that are connected to white supremacy and racial power, which continue to be maintained over time and facilitated by our government policy and law," I respond. "Actually, using your own personal story to illuminate and explore experiences of discrimination and oppression follows a major theme in critical race theory (See Delgado, 1999; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yanow, 2007).

"Okay, okay Ms. Smartypants... we get your point," John says as he laughs and nudges me in the arm. "So, what's your story then missy?"

"Well, I don't know about you guys," Shane. "But all this serious political talk is distracting us from a very important task."

"Oh yeah, what's that Shane?" I say with a hint of sarcasm.

"Making good work out of these nachos... duh!"

We all laugh...and then...we eat.

Epilogue

It takes great courage and strength to share your own personal story. Our Elders teach us it is a great gift to receive a story and we need to acknowledge the power and value of the story by accepting it and letting it do its work—which is to move us forward on a good path. Graveline (1998) states that the only way to really know, to really see and hear someone else, is through respectful listening. It is only by suspending our own preconceived judgments and engaging in respectful listening, that we are truly able to enter into another's experience through their words.

*There is a cost of carrying a card
And it's not an annual membership fee.*

*So then what, you ask, is the cost of carrying a card?
Often, it is the price of respect and human dignity.*

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A Report on the Water Ceremony & Candlelight Vigil for the Missing Murdered Indigenous Women at Honouring the Circle, Hamilton, Ontario

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“Water is what sustains us. Water is what brings us into this world, and water is what keeps us in this physical world. And so it’s our life” (Anderson, 2010).

Honouring the Circle is a safe haven for Indigenous women and their children who are fleeing domestic abuse situations. October 4th 2014 was dedicated to honouring the lives of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and supporting the families who have been tragically touched by the loss of a loved one to violence. On this day in Canada more than 100 Sisters in Spirit Vigils were held from coast-to coast. This cultural event brought Indigenous communities and Canadian citizens together to celebrate, honour and support Indigenous women and girls. It also helped the community heal and grieve the loss of the women who had been murdered or are still missing. When helping with an Indigenous approach it is important to review the social causes of illness and their relation to community cohesion (LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990).

This event directly relates to the impact that colonization has had on Indigenous women, where Indigenous peoples were forced into subordinate positions within dominant society. Violent crimes against Indigenous peoples, specifically women and girls, continue to be a long-standing issue in Canada. Indigenous women have endured countless legislative intrusions directed at assimilating and controlling the four spheres of everyday tribal life: political, social/kinship, spiritual, and the land and this is indisputably structural violence (Sterritt, 2007). The cumulative result of colonization is the extreme marginalization of Indigenous women from the social safety nets of society. Indigenous women face the routine dispossession of their inherited rights, lands, identities and families and they also face disenfranchisement from institutional and societal protections designed to protect them from violent predators (Perry, 2008). Prior to colonization Indigenous communities highly valued women who were property owners with significant social, economic, and political decision-making power (Perry, 2008). Colonialism increased gender inequality within Indigenous communities and resulted in the devaluation of Indigenous women. Colonial policies and practices, and their altering of gender relations, is believed to have increased Indigenous women’s vulnerability by impacting the power dynamics in Indigenous women’s intimate relationships with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men (Weaver, 2009). The structural constraints that are placed on their lives, creates this basis to make Indigenous women appear vulnerable, subordinate and legitimate targets. This

is in direct contrast to an Indigenous way of life based on the spiritual necessity to live in harmony with all other beings and treat all with respect and great care (Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project, 1991).

More than 150 people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, gathered together to honour and bring awareness to these lost women. When you entered you signed a banner signifying the unified effort between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to put a stop to the endless violence against Indigenous women. As everyone took his or her seats an Elder, and a Grandmother who had lost her granddaughter, from the Six Nations of the Grand River community welcomed everyone in her traditional language. She then switched to English to welcome everyone again and explain the significance of water ceremony. She stated that she had offered tobacco and prayed to the Spirit of the water. She had thanked the Creator for the water and that the water that we would all be partaking in later together had been blessed. She spoke about the spiritual quality of water, and the significance of this spirit as it creates and sustains life. In order to survive you need a relationship with your family, the community and your land. She provided a visual interpretation by describing that the water is to the land as the blood that flows through our veins. If our blood stops flowing we will die. If the water stops flowing, the trees, the plants, and the environment will die. When you respect the water it will respect you.

After the Elder finished welcoming everyone she thanked the Creator for what we were about to eat. A traditional buffet consisting of fruits, meats, nuts, fowl, vegetables, fish, grains, and bread was provided for everyone. This food was collected using the traditional methods of trapping, hunting, gathering, and planting. This was important because it reinforced the connection to the land and the healing principle of reconnecting to traditions and culture. The water ceremony was an excellent way to open the door for healing to take place because the focus was on feeding the body and mind, while addressing the spirit of women and the emotions tied to the loss of so many from their own communities. After the meal was completed Linda Ense, who was born and raised on Six Nations and belongs to the Onondaga Nation, Wolf Clan, shared the story of Tina Fontaine. She compared Tina's story to the story of an all-out manhunt that was launched by police, looking for a girl Tina's age in London, England. The apparent differences in the level of care and the resources put towards each effort were appalling. Linda is the Executive Director of the Native Women's Centre in Hamilton, and sits on a number of community committees focusing on issues related to violence against women. Her speech was heartbreaking and very emotional for all who participated. It appeared as though there were quite a few people in attendance who had some personal connection to a woman or girl who had been murdered or was still listed as missing. After her speech there was a moment of silence followed by a group of four young men who sang and drummed while pictures of the missing and murdered women were held up on stage. Many people in attendance openly cried. I felt that this was so powerful because it demonstrated the connection that these male youths had to their culture by singing traditional songs and were vocalizing against the intergenerational violence experienced by Indigenous women that could be their grandmothers, mothers, sisters, or friends.

The water ceremony was then held and the Elder/Grandmother poured the water from a tin vessel that was blessed and was “pure and clean” into cups that everyone who attended was given. This process was to signify a commitment between the spirit world and the physical world so that the water would always take care of us. An Indigenous approach values the relationship people have to the earth and the belief in balance among all living things. The distinct relationship between women and water according to many Indigenous cultures is connected to the fact that women’s bodies have the capacity to host and sustain the life force that water represents and the role of water as part of the larger feminine body of Mother Earth (Anderson, 2010). Their land-based lifestyle allowed for a close relationship with water in all its forms so traditionally they were connecting with all of the different elements that are part of creation, the winds, the water, the sun, the moon. Water signifies life and sustains life, and this translates into a number of healing properties and cleansing applications. The Elder informed all partaking about how she had talked to the water and was carrying on the message of water to other women.

After she was finished speaking, a round dance was held to celebrate and memorialize the lives of the missing and murdered women. You could feel the air in the room get lighter and witness how partaking in cultural activities revitalized and brought smiles to the faces of those who had lost family members. They were moving from grief on their journey towards healing. The young men drummed in unison and sang songs while everyone in the room joined hands and formed a large circle around the room. This aligned with the social work principle of empowerment by displaying and teaching non-Indigenous peoples this positive and respectful practice that is consistent with Indigenous ways. The dance was rhythmic and moved to the left with a side-shuffle step where we were bending our knees to reflect the pattern of the drumbeat. As we danced our joined hands moved in a circular motion to pair with the pattern of our dancing feet. The song that was used had a structure of a powwow and it resembled a chant. You could witness the look of pride in the faces of those attending from the Indigenous community and feel the sense of community among all participants. Although I do not come from an Indigenous background I felt extremely welcomed and enjoyed being able to really celebrate Indigenous peoples identity. Knowing the history of colonization, assimilation and marginalization of Indigenous peoples, I appreciated that without hesitation I was invited to be included in becoming the spirit of one people with one voice.

I was able to speak candidly to my placement supervisor about this ceremony. I could definitely relate to the *Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project* (1991) reading when it referred to how questions by non-Indigenous people may strike Indigenous people as intrusive or idle prying. Throughout my placement at the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre I felt that my questions never stopped. My supervisor Corene Cheeseman always challenged me on my way of thinking and reminded me that as a non-Indigenous person, I will never fully understand what Indigenous people know. I always appreciated the candid conversations we are able to have as she revealed things about herself and her life experiences that I would never know about or read

in textbooks. I respect her for sharing these things with me and will always feel grateful for that placement opportunity. It allowed me to take a closer look at my own feelings and what my role in the field of Indigenous Social Work can be. I enjoyed Corene's wisdom and her insight into the Indigenous traditions and beliefs that she practices in her own life. It really added meaning to what I was learning and I am now comfortable with the fact that I will not always understand Indigenous spirituality but it is not always something that needs to be understood (Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project, 1991). Corene explained our relationship with the water as giving us life and being a scared element that purifies the body. She said that in ceremony it is important to honour and acknowledge what gives us life. When we thank the Creator and the spirit of the water; offer it tobacco, it protects the water. She explained that water is central in their language and in their stories (Corene Cheeseman, personal communication, September - December, 2015).

I also had the opportunity to listen to a woman named Trish Meekins who was completing her Masters in the Indigenous Social Work Program and did a presentation at the 9th Annual Emerging Models of Wholistic Healing Practices held at Laurier University. Her presentation was on the Sacred Migration Water Walk and our relationship to water. She showed the map of path of the walk from Quebec to Wisconsin and explained how women are responsible to carry the water. This walk recognizes the role that Indigenous women play as life-givers and protectors of the water in our country and how women need to protect the water for future generations. The focus of last year's walk was on the oil spills that have occurred due to trains and ships and the disastrous effect this pollution has on the Great Lakes. Participants would walk up to 90 kilometers a day and sometimes begin their walk at 2:30am in the morning. It sounded like a physically exhausting yet spiritual journey and experience for her. By the end of the journey she said that she had really connected to the water and could feel it moving around her and that it reconnected her to the history and stories of the past migration. While walking they sang songs of gratitude and at every body of water they encountered they offered tobacco. She closed her presentation with a picture of the core group that completed the majority of the walk and it appeared as though there were "spiritual spots" dotting the sky. She stated that she felt they were the ancestors who had guided the group along the way. She had a picture of a sign she had seen along the way that said, "Only when the last tree has died, the last fish has been caught will we realize that we cannot eat money." This quote really resonated with me and since the presentation I have found myself thinking about it often.

One of the gifts I received from taking part in this traditional helping practice was to witness how participating in a cultural ceremony positively affected members of the community. Indigenous peoples live in a world of dysfunction and the mainstream approach to helping which aims to be cross-cultural and anti-oppressive has merely attempted to obscure and disguise hundreds of years of oppression, marginalization and cultural destruction. An Indigenous helping approach requires mainstream knowledge to be modified. It must be more flexible, and determine relevant, culturally appropriate perspectives to creatively customize programs to meet

the needs of the Indigenous community that you are working with (Hick, 2002). A holistic approach is based on the belief that true physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual healing occurs when an individual is in harmony with their environment (Hick, 2002). It made me reflect on my future helping practice and some principles that I will intend to implement when helping others.

There are four basic principles that underlie an Indigenous cultural specific approach to practice: recognition of a distinct Indigenous world view; the development of Indigenous consciousness about the impact of colonialism; cultural knowledge and traditions as an active component of retaining Indigenous identity; and empowerment as a method of practice (Hick, 2002). Culture is power and most traditional practices and cultural events involve spirituality. Spirituality affects every aspect of Indigenous life including ways of healing and ways of dealing with grief (Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project, 1991).

The first principle of valuing the distinctiveness of an Indigenous worldview includes understanding an individual's relationship to the earth and their belief in balance among all living things (Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project, 1991). As Connors (1994) states, health is a product of endless balanced relationships between all facets of creation. This holistic perception about interdependence and the collective approach towards healing that Indigenous people abide by is often dissimilar from the individual approach that dominant society embraces. Dominant society works and grows in a linear fashion whereas Indigenous societies believe in the continuity of the circle as an exemplary way to achieve balance between survival needs and the needs of the family, community, and nation. Within the environmental paradigm spirituality is defined as the personal relationship that each individual has with his or her Creator. This reminds helpers that not all Indigenous clients will be connected to their spirituality which is why it is so important to consult with each client in order to develop a case plan that is client centered. In order to establish a trusting counsellor-client relationship, knowledge of and respect for an Indigenous person's worldview according to their level of acculturation is vital to defining the counselling style or approach to use that is most appropriate for each client (LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990). This will help to determine the role that traditional ceremonies will play in their healing process. For most individuals, ceremony reinforces cultural values and reminds participants of the importance of strengthening and revitalizing family and community networks (LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990).

The second principle of an Indigenous helping approach involves analyzing the impact of colonization and developing understanding of the ways that Indigenous peoples were made to become subordinate to dominant society. This was accomplished through government policies that displaced Indigenous spirituality and replaced it with an attitude of patriarchy. A side effect of colonization is the adoption of the colonial attitude among elements of Indigenous communities themselves which has led to the high level of internalized violence within Indigenous communities and against women and children (Morrissette, McKenzie & Morrissette, 1993). The history of colonization has also produced fear of outside agencies that have attempted

to destroy the internal bonds of mutual aid prevalent among Indigenous communities (LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990). The oppression, racism, and patronizing attitudes experienced by many Indigenous peoples with non-Indigenous helpers has served to undermine clients' estimations of a counselor's empathy and trustworthiness. "Given historical and contemporary oppression and cultural clashes associated with the act of seeking help, trustworthiness probably is more important for Indians than it is for non-Indians seeking psychological assistance" (LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990, p. 634). This reinforces the need to ensure that your helping practice prioritizes the client's cultural values and that cultural competence includes a willingness to engage in the unknown.

The third principle of culturally competent helping is the significance that reclaiming and embracing cultural knowledge, language, and spirituality has on clients. Indigenous culture is a source of liberation and empowerment by helping to shape an individual's self-identity and create a feeling of belonging (Morrisette et al., 1993). When an Indigenous person is able to challenge the structural causes of their personal history and reconnect to traditions and culture the door becomes opened for healing to take place. The power of traditional healing is experienced by Indigenous peoples holistically within the mind, body, emotions, and spirit during the use of sweat lodges, fasting, vision quests, herbal medicines, sharing circles, and individualized counselling (Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project, 1991). It is important to be able to recognize Indigenous social work clients who prefer the use of these traditional methods and to be able to appropriately refer them to Elders or agencies that do not practice conventional theory and method. It is also imperative that non-traditional Indigenous clients be made aware of the traditional options available to them in order to address their issues of self-esteem and powerlessness (Morrisette et al., 1993).

The final principle that I hope to convey from my helping practice is empowerment. This is achieved by emphasizing the participation of community members in promoting self-determination to effect power and social change (Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project, 1991). Personal and collective empowerment emphasizes the examination of colonial history as a basis to alter stereotypes and false beliefs that Indigenous people carry with them while also focusing on culture and traditions to restore identity and self-esteem (Morrisette et al., 1993). Culture is used to empower individuals to restore their balance by eliminating the destructive coping measures such as substance use and violence they have adopted from dominant culture and replace them with more positive and respectful practices that are consistent with Indigenous ways (Morrisette et al., 1993). When a client's need for a sense of cultural identity from their heritage and in their family and community are met, healing can begin to occur (Hughes & Sasson, 1990). Learning each community's special competencies and what practices work with them will guide practitioners to be more effective in this empowering process. A successful Indigenous helping practice will empower participants by reconnecting them to their natural community supports, such as Elders, that utilize traditional healing practices. Elders have worked through the problems of life and have gained wisdom through their experiences, which they pass

on to help guide others so that they too may cope successfully with the life they are given (Oates, 1988).

“Cultural ignorance, and not a lack of good intentions, often results in the non-native worker lacking a clear comprehension as to the degree of damage they are inflicting on the community with the way they are approaching the problem” (Oates, 1988). This quote resonated with me, as I am about to begin my journey as a registered social worker. It is a gentle reminder to always be aware of the clientele and community that I am working with and to approach all issues in a way that exemplifies the cultural competent social work practice that I have been taught as a student in the Indigenous Social Work Program at Laurentian University.

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CALL FOR PAPERS, VOLUME 11

“Traditional Knowledge in the Helping Professions”

The Board of the Indigenous Social Work Journal, a scholarly and community-based publication, is pleased to announce a Call for Papers for Volume 11 of its journal. The focus of this issue is, “Traditional Knowledge in the Helping Professions.”

Since time immemorial, the Indigenous Peoples of North America, and beyond, practiced time-honoured healing systems. With the arrival of settler societies, colonial policies such as the Indian Act of Canada, outlawed these healing systems, gradually leading to their decline. Despite this, knowledge of Indigenous healing remains and the helping professions are gradually accommodating the inclusion of Indigenous approaches to healing. In recognition of this, we are seeking article submissions that explore this changing terrain in the helping professions in the following categories:

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Authors must submit their articles in A.P.A. style format (6th edition). Please follow manual guidelines. Articles should be no longer than 5000 words. Articles previously published or under current consideration for publication elsewhere shall not be considered for publication. Please provide an abstract, double space all materials and submit an email version.

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